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Seventy-second session

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New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rodolfo Nin Novoa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Nin Novoa (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we greet all delegations, we also welcome the holding of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. Uruguay is convinced that today more than ever we need to strengthen these bodies of international coordination and leadership. Failure to do so would be to abandon humankind to transnational powers that escape regulation and arbitrarily impose their rule, notwithstanding the full validity of national sovereignties, which, throughout the course of history, have shown great longevity and bravely responded to challenges.

By instituting the reforms necessary to adapt its structures and methodologies to a time that is very different from the one in which it was born, the United Nations should become stronger, and the General Assembly, its main body, should be given higher priority. This would be a worthwhile endeavour, given that the Assembly is and will continue to be the expression of a universal *demos*, which humankind must safeguard as the ideal for organizing peaceful coexistence on a global scale, where all States, large and small, are equally worthy and respected.

Uruguay's foreign policy has focused on certain traditional pillars that have governed its actions throughout history, such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for and promotion of human rights, the defence of multilateralism, and the commitment to dialogue and peace. These are the principles that our country has historically defended and actively promoted. Uruguay has made these pillars its State policy, supported by all its political parties regardless of the different ideological or programmatic orientations that alternate based on the rotation of power that is inherent to our idea of democracy. They represent a common heritage and a key chapter of the agreements entered into throughout our history that define our national identity.

Today, with the world facing a broad range of threats and challenges, Uruguay is resolved to make its voice heard and base its actions on the international stage on those cornerstones that have held up its architecture in a peaceful and democratic manner. The increase in armed conflicts, characterized by unprecedented violence, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the expansion in the trade of all types of weapons, the spread of terrorism, cyberattacks, hunger and the devastating effects of climate change make it more than ever necessary for the international community to make a strong commitment to addressing them.

At a time when many of these expressions of violence and devastation are the result of global causes, it would be injudicious to strive to impose painful or insufficiently local responses to such challenges. The international community must rise to the occasion, consolidate its frameworks for joint action and

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strengthen global governance in order to resolve these serious problems.

Today, millions of people are directly affected by violence and armed conflict. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and thousands of others injured, and millions of displaced persons have been forced to flee their homes and risk their lives in search of peace. We should never consent to idly stand by when faced with such tragedy and devastation, in the midst of an indifference out of which we are shaken only exceptionally, when a memorable image moves or strikes us. Such an image — and this is the greatest tragedy — may be sadly representative of the fate of tens or hundreds of thousands of human beings whose lives and sad destinies we will never know. "Wasted lives" was how Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, the father of "liquid modernity", described them in his outstanding essay. It is only right to recall here that the world bade Bauman farewell earlier this year.

Unfortunately, human trafficking networks, which take advantage of human despair and vulnerability, emerge in those contexts, promising people a non-existent future. In the face of this scourge, all countries gathered here must redouble their efforts to combat all forms of trafficking, including human trafficking. All States must cooperate in order to put an end to all such heinous practices, which denigrate their victims and strip them of their basic humanity in service of the interests of global criminal and terrorist networks, and in order to promote the growth and social development of nations.

Let us call a spade a spade: inequality remains the main cause of most of the difficulties and threats that we face. We all know that, with the current advances in science and technology, poverty and hunger are unacceptable, and issues stemming from poor organization and the inequitable distribution of power and national and international resources are the cause of their unjustifiable persistence. For that reason, we reiterate that the rule of law and development are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. Both are therefore essential to sustainable development at the national and international levels.

Uruguay fully endorse the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to leave no one behind. It pledges its unqualified support for that commitment, without any preconditions. It is a commitment that can be undertaken in a straightforward manner by a country such as ours, which throughout its history has made the fight against abandonment one of the marks of its identity and succeeded in building, from a relatively early stage, a reasonably integrated society with a significant degree of social cohesion, although not without having to confront challenges and difficulties.

In July, at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, my country, for the second year in a row, submitted its voluntary national report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which involved carrying out a regular process of consultations and interinstitutional coordination with the participation of the Government, academia, civil society, the private sector and international organizations, with respect to its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, there is an issue on the United Nations agenda that is even more vital for Uruguay — disarmament as a prelude to peace. The international community must be committed to actively seeking effective solutions to this global problem. The growing threat of terrorism and the challenge it poses to the international community as a whole, the risk of the potential use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups, and the acquisition and use of conventional weapons and the links of such weapons with transnational crime have made the failure to disarm one of the greatest threats facing humankind. It is therefore a matter of deep concern. Controlling the international arms trade is an urgent necessity, given that trafficking and arms deals with warring parties in conflicts contribute directly to the suffering and murder of civilians.

For that reason, the accession to and ratification of international instruments intended to protect civilians, such as the historic Arms Trade Treaty, are a great contribution to that end. And let me repeat here in the General Assembly something that has already been mentioned in the Security Council. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 74 per cent of the total volume of arms exports in the period 2011-2015 was carried out specifically by the five permanent members of the Security Council. Similarly, military spending in 2016 was $1.69 trillion, which was higher than in 2015.

We should ask ourselves how many needs could have been met had those funds been redirected to

the economic and social development of countries. The possession of nuclear weapons and the delay in disarmament by the States that possess them also endanger and threaten the world's stability and human security. If the proliferation of nuclear weapons overtakes diplomacy, the consequences will be devastating. Diplomacy, diplomacy and more diplomacy: that is the path that we must take.

The use and threat of use of nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humankind and a serious violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as of the Charter of the United Nations. The only guarantee against the use and threat of use of those weapons is their explicit prohibition and total elimination. Nevertheless, far from abandoning their weapons programmes, the nuclear Powers continue to improve and actively modernize their nuclear arsenals. Data from specialized organizations indicate that nine countries have more than 17,000 nuclear weapons, of which approximately 2,000 are on high alert, ready to be launched at a moment's notice.

Uruguay welcomes the success of the United Nations conference that negotiated a binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons and bring about their total elimination. It concluded with the adoption of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, recently opened to all States for signature, and to which Uruguay has just acceded. In that regard, we call on all countries to sign the instrument, which aims to ensure a dignified life for future generations and avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

As part of its concern about the development of nuclear weapons, Uruguay expresses its strong condemnation of North Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic-missile launches and urges that country to abandon its existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible way, putting an immediate end to all related activities, including launches using ballistic-missile technology, and other acts of provocation.

In the same vein, we urge that country to respect the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which it abandoned in 2003, and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime. However, we also urge all countries, in particular the great United States, to avoid the verbal escalations that have always preceded major tragedies throughout history and weigh every word in a responsible manner, eschewing all violent rhetoric. A dynamic of antagonism often makes it impossible to stick to the facts.

In addressing the 3rd meeting of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, our Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, made reference to "sleepwalking our way to war", inspired by the eloquent title recently used by the historian Christopher Clark to describe how human beings and nations marched into the tragedy of the First World War, dazed and confused by mutual misunderstandings and unheeded warnings. When they became aware of the outcome, it was too late.

Just three months before ending its term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Uruguay wishes to emphasize once again that it is firmly convinced of the importance of focusing its efforts on protecting civilian populations in all conflict zones by using different modalities, through peacekeeping operations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, by, inter alia, protecting hospitals and medical personnel and denouncing flagrant violations of human rights.

In the current context of crisis, we wish to acknowledge the bravery and altruism of humanitarian personnel as they continue to assist, at the risk of their own lives, those in need in conflict situations. We understand that the best way to honour humanitarian workers, who have saved thousands of lives in numerous settings, is to devise successful policies and reach agreement within the framework of the United Nations to bring about the immediate cessation of attacks on civilians, while making possible the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in conflict situations. We are concerned at the increasing number of attacks on and deliberate bombings of civilians, humanitarian workers and civil infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and markets, all of which are serious human rights violations.

The ultimate atrocity is when defenceless human beings are attacked while they are assisting other defenceless human beings at the worst times and in the worst places. Not only should we emphatically condemn this, but we should also adopt resolutions to protect victims and bring perpetrators to justice. Uruguay once again calls for full compliance with Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2286 (2016), and the establishment of effective mechanisms for its

implementation. I wish to reiterate that this kind of attack against civilian targets, disguised as collateral attacks, should never be tolerated.

It is undeniable that we are experiencing deep-seated changes in the kinds of conflicts we are seeing. The increasing presence of terrorist organizations and non-State actors spreads fear among populations and disproportionately undermines the rights of women and children. History has shown us that there is a constant pattern in terms of conflicts in the world, regardless of region or religion. Women and girls are those who suffer the consequences most. War invades their lives, threatening their sense of security.

In this context, as an elected member of the Security Council, a country with a long-standing participation in various peacekeeping operations and an active troop contributor, Uruguay is intent on fighting sexual exploitation and abuse in armed conflicts. We are deeply committed to the zero-tolerance policy. We reiterate our support for this policy and are working very hard to prevent new cases of abuse and sexual exploitation in peacekeeping operations, with the understanding that a single case is one too many.

For more than 50 years, Uruguay knew what it was like to be outside the most important decision-making body in the world. That is why we believe it is vital that the issues taken up by the Security Council be public knowledge for all Members of the United Nations. What is discussed there is of such importance that all States present here today should be aware of what goes on behind closed doors. That is why Uruguay will continue working towards more transparent and inclusive working methods in the United Nations within the framework of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, as well as in other multilateral contexts. As a signatory to the Charter of the United Nations, Uruguay emphasizes its commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations while committing itself to working tirelessly to sustain those principles, which we believe are vital for building a safer and more prosperous future.

We cannot even think of peace in the world if the international community does not make a serious commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation. Any progress in disarmament and non-proliferation — be it serious commitments; gradual, effective, specific steps forward; or results — must be welcomed and celebrated as a tremendous achievement of the United Nations.

We wish to conclude our statement by highlighting the overarching historical significance of the peace process that has been gaining ground in Colombia and putting an end to the armed conflicts that divided it, drowning it in pain and blood for many long decades. As Uruguayans, as Latin Americans and, in this case, as the then President of the Security Council, we are pleased and proud to have made a modest contribution to the building of peace in Colombia. This is the best example we have when we talk about specific results.

It is our Latin America that we have made a region of peace today. The great note of hope that has sounded when this ceasefire and the peace agreement were reached gives us the enthusiasm we need to take on the new and difficult missions in other parts of the world in which the way out often seems difficult to see. Latin America has single-mindedly rejected all attempts to resolve internal conflicts in Latin America, no matter how intense they are, through military intervention.

In the historical experience of our continent, such interventions have only left a trail of lasting violence, poverty and instability. Latin America is united as a block against interventionist war-mongering endeavours that are neither rational nor prudent.

I would like to reiterate once again our emphatic rejection of the unfair blockade which, after 55 years, is still looming over our sister Republic of Cuba, and we express our sympathy and condolences in connection with the victims of the hurricanes and earthquakes that recently affected the region.

In conclusion, achieving a sustainable planet and a decent life requires the effective use of existing resources so that we can live in peace and security and our legacy can be a habitable world for future generations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See.

Archbishop Gallagher (Holy See): On behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis, I am pleased to congratulate Your Excellency on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to commend you on the choice of the theme for the general debate: "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet." It is a congenial topic for the Holy See. Pope Francis never tires of insisting on people first, especially those

who suffer, those who are excluded, marginalized or left behind.

The Catholic Church expresses the meaning of focusing on people in these words: the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ, because, indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in our hearts. Focusing on people means not only protecting them from heinous crimes, but also placing them ahead of all national and geopolitical interests and fulfilling all the international political commitments undertaken throughout the history of the United Nations relating to social and economic development, starting with those set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

Always putting people first means protecting, at every stage and in every circumstance, the dignity of the person, human rights, fundamental freedoms and, in a specific way, the rights to life and to freedom of religion, from which all other rights flow. These two human rights are the common foundation of the pillars of peace, security and integral human development. They are indivisible from those other rights and fundamental freedoms relating to a dignified, spiritual, material and intellectual life for all citizens and their families, including, inter alia, the right to food, water, housing, a safe environment and work.

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the international community committed itself to effective measures to eradicate the root causes of various evils and indignities that many people in the world are facing today. Moments before the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Pope Francis defined the Agenda as an important sign of hope. One of the fundamental reasons for this hope is that world leaders had agreed on a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity and were determined to end poverty and hunger in all their forms and manifestations and to ensure that all human beings could fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. Their common resolve to leave no one behind articulates the core of this focus on people.

With regard to political commitments, Pope Francis has also urged the Organization and the international community not to fall into what could be called "declarationist nominalism". Accordingly, we must guard against having soothed consciences and feeling good simply because we adopted the 2030 Agenda and other important international accords. On the contrary, we must not rest until our legal commitments have been truly fulfilled and our political promises kept when it comes to the lives of people. We must therefore take a hard and honest look at the principal challenges that the peoples of the world are facing today and will face tomorrow. With this in mind, responsible compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, as well as the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, could be a way of focusing all countries and international organizations on working together for peace, setting aside the dangerous game of exchanging threats.

From this perspective, the Holy See sees the forthcoming reform and fine-tuning of the United Nations development system as an additional opportunity for placing people and their needs at the centre of our action. In so doing so, as Pope Francis reminded us in this Hall two years ago, we must allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny (see A/70/PV.3).

Christian churches, in particular the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, celebrate together on 1 September the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation to heighten public awareness of their shared responsibility to take care of our common home and contribute to reversing environmental degradation. To mark the World Day of Prayer this year, Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I released a joint message affirming that the Earth was entrusted to us as a sublime gift and legacy for which all of us share responsibility. Our human dignity and welfare are deeply connected to our care for the whole of creation.

This call for responsible stewardship finds particular urgency before the deteriorating conditions of our common home and an often purely utilitarian world view concerning the things that surround us. Any harm done to the environment is harm done to humankind today and tomorrow. Therefore, the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion, given that the deterioration of the planet affects, first and foremost, the many billions trapped in poverty or in conditions of environmental stress across the globe. This dramatic reality of exclusion and inequality must lead all of us to take stock of our shared and individual

responsibilities. The pressing call and challenge to care for creation invite all humankind to work unhesitatingly towards sustainable and integral development.

Improving climate conditions and the natural environment is possible only if we accept the need to change the way we perceive the world and thus our way of relating to it. Although our common home is falling into serious disrepair, we can reverse the trend of environmental degradation. Indeed, as Pope Francis emphasized in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, while we are capable of the worst, we are also capable of the best, rising above ourselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start.

The duty to prevent wars and violent conflicts is an essential component of the responsibility to protect. The Holy See therefore appreciates the Secretary-General's explicit and strong emphasis on preventive diplomacy and concurs with his assessment that the most serious shortcoming of the entire international community is the frequent inability to prevent crises. Prevention requires, first of all, restoring faith in the capacity of humankind for dialogue. An environment of trust is urgently needed. All countries should take a decisive and urgent step back from the present escalation of military preparations. The largest countries and those that have a stronger tradition of respecting human rights should be the first to perform generous actions of pacification. All diplomatic and political means of mediation should be engaged in order to avoid the unspeakable.

Allow me to recall the appeal of Pope Pius XII to all nations on 24 August 1939, on the eve of the Second World War:

> "The way of justice is promoted by the strength of reason and not with the force of arms... The danger is imminent, but there is still time. Nothing is lost with peace. With war, everything is lost. May people come back to understand each other and take up again negotiations. By negotiating with good will and with respect for mutual rights, they will realize that sincere and active negotiations never preclude an honourable success."

In such a context, I would like to recall that a dozen years have passed since the historica gathering of world leaders in this Hall for the 2005 World Summit. Focusing on people, the Heads of State and Government of the Members of the Organization reached consensus on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. There is no doubt that a collective political consensus is necessary, but a reflection on Articles 2, paragraph 7 and 39 of the Charter of the United Nations is also needed.

The Holy See therefore supports all initiatives designed to facilitate observing obligations under the responsibility to protect, but it would like to remind the international community once again that without a legal framework or fair respect of the international rule of law, the application of the principle is unfeasible.

The war in Yemen is causing a humanitarian catastrophe of apocalyptic proportions. The tragedy stemming from the war in Syria continues to grow every day. Involved stakeholders should sit at the United Nations negotiating table with the sole precondition that human rights law and principles be respected and that humanitarian access and assistance be allowed. At the same time, States, especially those that at some time in recent history have been directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, must undertake all means to reach a ceasefire, which is a first step towards peace.

The Holy See is particularly concerned about the political divisions and instability in Venezuela and its humanitarian crisis. In addition, the international community must address the complex political and diplomatic tensions in the Arabian peninsula, as well as the violence and the various humanitarian situations in the Middle East. We must all strive for an end to violence and for reaching a solution that can enable both Palestinians and Israelis alike to live at last in peace within clearly established and internationally recognized borders, thus implementing the two-State solution.

The ongoing violence and intense political tension in the Democratic Republic of the Congo necessitate an urgent and efficient commitment from all parties to finding a solution to the constitutional crisis. Furthermore, there is a need for greater public awareness of certain ongoing conflict situations with a view to reaching negotiated and peaceful solutions to them, especially in Ukraine, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, inter alia.

Along the same lines, as Pope Francis has stated, there is

> "another kind of conflict that is not always so explicit and yet is silently killing millions of people.

> Many of our societies experience a different kind of war as a result of the drug trade" *(A/70/PV.3, p. 6)*.

The drug trade has joined other forms of corruption and has

> "penetrated into every level of life — social, political, military, artistic and religious — and in many cases has given rise to a parallel structure that threatens the credibility of our institutions" *(ibid)*.

In a similar vein, the Holy See is concerned with the challenges of fighting corruption and terrorism and with promoting stable peace and a sustainable development in many countries of the world. The Holy See wishes to stress again that terrorism can be countered only by more cohesive and coherent measures at the international level: as terror knows no border, the international community must act as a whole.

The full protection of people is possible only with a durable peace. However, the protection of civilian populations must also be ensured during times of war The recent gangrenous conflicts both weaken and reveal the shortcomings of the international order and cause inexplicable suffering, massive displacements, blatant violations of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms and extreme poverty. There is no worse man-made crisis than violent conflicts. They drive people forcibly to migrate or become refugees. They engender mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. Indeed, as Pope Francis told the Assembly, "War is the negation of all rights" (*ibid., p. 5*).

The lamentable situation of the hundreds of millions of migrants and refugees fleeing from wars, persecution, natural disasters and extreme poverty, particularly in Nigeria, Myanmar, Somalia and countries of the sub-Saharan region, inter alia, is a great responsibility for all without exception.

Our common humanity compels us all, as Pope Francis has proposed, to welcome, protect, promote and integrate those who flee from such adverse conditions. These four actions are based on the proposition that migrants, despite many real or imagined challenges, are good for society, and on the principle of solidarity with those in need. In particular, they express our shared responsibility towards the victims of the genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity that the international community has failed to prevent or stop, in blatant neglect of the principles of international law.

The Holy See will vigorously work to see these four concepts enshrined and reflected in the future Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. The Holy See believes that these United Nations-led processes offer a unique opportunity to respond collectively to challenges through international cooperation and shared responsibility. The Holy See urges the international community to overcome the current political impasse and go beyond the negative sentiments that we face in opening safe, orderly and regular pathways for migration. In order to achieve the desired outcome, the contribution of political communities, civil society and all stakeholders is indispensable, each according to their respective responsibilities.

While some migrants may be motivated by the legitimate desire to improve their already acceptable situations, most would likely choose not to migrate if they enjoyed peace and economic security in their home countries. It is a basic human right to live in one's own country, but that right is effective only if the root causes that force people to migrate, such as wars and conflicts, mass atrocities and persecutions, and dire economic and environmental hardships, are met with adequate solutions. Indeed, if basic necessary conditions were met, people would not feel forced to leave their homes, making migration manageable and voluntary. The focus in negotiating the Compacts therefore should not be limited to stopping migrants in their tracks or confining refugees to camps, but, instead, it should address the causes that deprive them of living with dignity and force them to make life-threatening journeys. This should be our goal, and it should be a key part of the Global Compact for Migration.

Another great challenge facing the international community is trafficking in persons. At the root of this and other contemporary forms of slavery are wars and conflicts, extreme poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion, lack of education or employment opportunities and environmental catastrophes. But we ought to recognize that on the demand side of such criminal trafficking there is also a crass selfishness that reaches the unimaginable heights of moral irresponsibility in the case of the trafficking of children, organs, tissues and embryos and in so-called transplant tourism. Such execrable forms of trade are exacerbated by corruption on the part of public

officials and common people willing to do anything for financial gain. Indeed, the migration and refugee crises are today facilitating an increase in trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of slavery.

The Holy See and the Catholic Church have long spoken out against the evil of trafficking in persons and, through the dedicated work of so many individuals and institutions, have sought to fight its root causes, care for the victims, raise awareness about this scourge and work with anyone and everyone to try to eliminate it. In an address on 10 April 2014, at the International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking, Pope Francis called trafficking in persons an "open wound on the body of contemporary society" and at the signing of the Universal Declaration Against Slavery, on 2 December 2014, he termed it an "atrocious scourge that is present throughout the world on a broad scale".

At the heart of this evil is the utter loss of respect for human dignity and the total indifference to the sufferings of fellow human beings. Modern slavery happens when people are treated as objects, which leads to their being deceived, raped, often sold and resold for various purposes, and in the end either killed or left devastated in mind and body, only to be finally thrown away or abandoned. By refocusing its attention on people and putting people first in its overall work, the Organization should unerringly support the fight against trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of slavery.

Pope Francis calls on everyone, and especially the competent authorities, to address this heinous crime through effective legal instruments, punish those who benefit from it, assist in the healing and the reintegration of its victims and eradicate its root causes. Our response must be commensurate with this great evil of our time.

The world is awash in all types of weapons, from nuclear weapons to small arms and light weapons. The arms trade, both licit and illicit, keeps on growing. The proliferation of arms, including weapons of mass destruction, among terrorist groups and other non-State actors has become a real danger. These trends are deeply worrying, but more disturbing still is the deep chasm that separates commitments made from actions taken in the field of disarmament and arms control. While everyone condemns the grave effects of arms proliferation, nothing has substantially changed on the ground, because, as Pope Francis has observed,

> "[W]e say the words 'no more war!', but at the same time we manufacture weapons and sell them ... to those who are at war with one another".

This must change. The proliferation of weapons simply aggravates situations of conflict and results in unimaginable human suffering and material costs, profoundly undermining development, human rights and the search for lasting peace. Without greater international and regional cooperation, especially among weapon-producing States, in terms of strictly controlling and limiting the production and movement of weapons, a world free of wars and violent conflicts will surely remain an illusion.

When Pope Francis addressed the General Assembly two years ago today, he drew attention to the urgent need to

> "work hard for a world free of nuclear weapons by implementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in letter and in spirit, until such instruments are totally banned" *(ibid., p. 5)*.

In his 2017 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Francis once again made a plea for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, the proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to increase international tensions, as can be seen in the situation on the Korean peninsula. As history shows, regional and bilateral treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons have been effective in establishing whole regions free from these weapons. It therefore seems all the more urgent that we invest in creating those circumstances that would facilitate the crafting of new bilateral and regional treaties.

The Holy See has signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and has already deposited its ratification document because it believes that it is an important contribution to the overall effort towards total and complete nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, that it represents progress toward the fulfilment of the commitment of the States parties to the Treaty to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and a step towards negotiating a general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. While much remains to be done for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to truly make a difference and fulfil its full promise, the Holy See

believes that it is one more blow on the anvil towards the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah:

> "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. António Gumende, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Gumende (Mozambique): I have the honour to address the seventy-second session of the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, who could not attend this gathering owing to other commitments at home. Allow me therefore to start by conveying President Nyusi's good wishes for a successful session of the Assembly, which is the highest forum for global political and diplomatic dialogue.

I would like to take this opportunity to join the speakers who preceded me in congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I assure you of the full commitment of Mozambique to contributing to the realization of the goals we have all envisaged to achieve during this important session. We trust that your gifted leadership and diplomatic experience will add value to our endeavours and contribute to the success of the work of this session.

I wish equally to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his stewardship and commitment to fulfilling the agenda at the last session of the General Assembly.

A special word of appreciation goes to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary-General, for the vision and leadership he has displayed in this, his first year in office. We believe that he is steering the Organization onto the right path in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness as it serves us, the Member States, in our quest to deliver on the ambitious goals we have set for our peoples. Only a strong and vibrant United Nations system can ensure that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals will deliver societies that are more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous than ever, without compromising the very existence of our planet.

Two years after we pledged our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, the world remains confronted with multiple and complex challenges that threaten to constrain the gains we made in fostering global peace and stability, stall and reverse the advances made in fostering social and economic well-being of our peoples, and cause irreversible damage to our planet. We therefore welcome the theme chosen for this session by the President of the General Assembly, namely, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", as it allows this body to reflect in a timely manner on how best to address the challenges before us. This reflection in a multilateral forum such as the General Assembly is essential if we are to coordinate and consolidate our approaches as we strive individually and collectively to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

The renewed focus on people should serve as a universal impetus for all the development actors to translate into practice actions that promote peace and the well-being of all humankind. It is worth recalling that our resolve is to make the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a framework that brings together the collective will to transform people's lives in a sustainable way by lifting them from poverty and promoting human dignity without neglecting peace, which is a critical factor in the attainment of sustainable development, based on the interplay of the economic, social and environmental pillars.

As we strive to accomplish these goals, we are challenged to find the ways and means to honour the commitments undertaken in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Only joint and complementary efforts in those three domains will enable us to build the necessary resilience at the national, regional and international levels commensurate with the challenges before us and in line with our aspiration of leaving no country behind.

The challenges we faced and the experiences we gained in the implementation of other globally agreed development goals in the past underline the need for greater commitment from our development partners to scale up and honour their assistance and for funding pledges made to support climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation, as well as disaster-prevention efforts in developing countries. This support is of paramount importance to mitigating the effects of climate variability, whose devastating effects have been laid bare in the last two months in several States Members of this body.

Furthermore, it is also clear that a robust and efficient United Nations system, together with a strong partnership between the Organization and the regional bodies, can play a catalytic role in accelerating national development and strengthening democratic political systems and institutions that can lead to more inclusive and peaceful societies. In that vein, we support the ongoing efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to reform and reposition the United Nations development system with a view to making it more responsive to the development needs of its Members.

The overwhelming challenges of our times require bold and determined political will to achieve the results we seek. Mozambique reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, since focusing on people has always been at the core of Mozambique's national development agenda. Accordingly, we have aligned our national development agenda to include the three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are now reflected in the five pillars of our national five-year plan, namely, consolidating national unity, peace and sovereignty; developing human and social capital; promoting employment, productivity and competitiveness; developing economic and social infrastructures; and ensuring sustainable and transparent management of natural resources and the environment.

Mozambique has created a multi-stakeholder national reference group that encompasses Government, civil society, the private sector and international cooperation partners for the management of the Sustainable Development Goals and is promoting capacity-building for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In the effort to consolidate national unity, peace and sovereignty, our focus on people leads us to strive to ensure that lasting peace and stability is a reality to all Mozambicans. Durable peace and stability therefore ranks as an overarching priority in our national agenda, as it is a crucial factor for the development and promotion of lasting human security in the broadest sense. Accordingly, the Government of Mozambique, under the leadership of President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, is striving for an inclusive dialogue with all political actors and civil society through both formal and informal mechanisms, including the Parliament. This inclusive approach is also used to engage Mozambicans in the conceptualization and implementation of the national development agenda.

Furthermore, our focus on people envisages not leaving anyone behind, which is one of the guiding precepts of our universal agenda. Therefore, particular attention is given to policies and strategies aimed at the protection and the full enjoyment of human rights, the promotion of gender equality and equity as well as the empowerment of women and youth, who constitute the majority of our people. Mozambique believes that our focus on people, peace, a decent life and a sustainable planet also requires a regional dimension, particularly in the context of a globalized world.

We are therefore encouraged by the contributions that regional and international multilateral mechanisms have made to prevent and manage conflicts and to promote peace and stability, in particular those under the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, to which we are proud to belong. We believe that mechanisms that promote peace and prosperity should also constitute a strong platform of action aimed at fostering dialogue among civilizations, an unquestionable tool in the promotion of a culture of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and a sustainable world. We pledge to continue to play our role in these endeavours.

Our resolve to focus on people entails that we address with a sense of urgency the root causes of the increase in unregulated migration and the massive flows of refugees, two dimensions of the human crises that we are confronted with in modern times. This regrettable reality is in great part a consequence of a succession of unresolved crises or poorly settled conflict situations in relation to which the international community bears a responsibility. In that connection, we risk achieving an ineffective and fragile peace if the international community remains focused on short-term and ad hoc measures that leave scope for the recurrence of the same intractable problems at a later stage. The international community should come together to redouble efforts and to build consensus to prevent the senseless loss of lives. We need to adopt measures to reduce people's vulnerabilities, complemented by actions that address the complex and structural causes of these mass movements, such as conflicts and political, social and economic exclusion.

A focus on people on a sustainable planet also requires urgent attention to climate change. Today more than ever before, the challenges posed by the adverse impact of climate change are noticeable. Every

day we are confronted by the destructive impact of climate change, challenging those who continue to harbour doubts about the effects of human activities on the environment and on the climate. The recent devastating effects of the hurricanes, the mudslides and the earthquake that affected millions of people in the Caribbean region, the United States of America, Sierra Leone and Mexico are vivid reminders of the scale of the natural disaster threats we face.

I would like to seize this opportunity to convey to the affected people and countries a message of solidarity and sympathy on behalf of the people and the Government of Mozambique. The great human losses and the destruction of infrastructure as a result of the scale and ferocity of these storms prove once again that, beyond our convictions, we need to reflect and to act as a common front to face the menaces arising from climatic change. To that end, we reaffirm the importance of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as an instrument to strengthen the much-needed partnerships for adaptation and mitigation measures.

The positive dynamics generated by the major development commitments made by the international community in 2015 have been overshadowed by the worrying signs of the eruption of political instability, the prevailing inter- and intra-State conflicts, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, the rising tensions in the Korean peninsula, as well as by the recurrence of acts of terrorism and of violent extremism. These challenges to peace and stability threaten to reverse the development gains registered over the recent decades and to hinder our development efforts as we chart the way forward.

Therefore, it is our hope that the ongoing peace initiatives as well as the measures to curb the recruitment and finance of terrorist groups will result in opportunities to further promote peace and development, as well as to strengthen human rights and to build more inclusive societies. Only through constructive dialogue and peaceful means and solutions can we secure durable peace and stability in our world. To that end, we would like to emphasize the importance of strong democratic institutions at the national level, the impact of regional cooperation and the role of the United Nations.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As we gather in this great Hall, the world is once again facing the threat of the dangers posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which have become the most dangerous existential threat that humankind faces in the twenty-first century. As a country with a Constitution that values the principle of the universal disarmament of all States and negotiated solutions to international conflicts, as well as the peaceful use of nuclear energy, Mozambique notes with great concern the escalation of tension and the risk of nuclear confrontation that is unfolding on the Korean peninsula. The catastrophic impact of a nuclear conflict demands a more restrained approach based on dialogue, skilful diplomacy and the political will to de-escalate and to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. More than anything else, the resolutions signal our collective disapproval of the course of events in that part of the world.

The lack of progress in the decolonization of Western Sahara, the sole African country still to exercise the right to self-determination, continues to be a cause for grave concern to Mozambique. Regrettably, all the efforts deployed by the United Nations, the African Union and other actors to bring about an accepted settlement aiming to grant the people of Western Sahara their inalienable right to self-determination and independence has not yielded results. We would like to seize this opportunity to call upon the Security Council, the General Assembly and the international community to exercise their responsibility by implementing their own resolutions, particularly regarding the principle of self-determination and right of freedom, as well as to support the African Union and its Special Envoy to Western Sahara, Mr. Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique.

The principle of self-determination and the right to freedom should also be a reality for the Palestinian people. To that end, it is imperative that the relevant Security Council resolutions be implemented. We believe that the solution relies on the two-State principle of Palestine and Israel coexisting side by side, in peace and security.

Mozambique has followed with great interest the efforts of Cuba and the United States of America to stabilize the diplomatic relations between these two neighbouring countries, an important step towards the normalization of bilateral relations and bringing to an end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America

against Cuba. In that context, we note with concern the latest developments and appeal to the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo, for it hinders the socioeconomic development of Cuba and the Cuban people. Therefore, Mozambique once again associates itself with the overwhelming majority of countries in this Hall to demand the immediate termination of this unilateral coercive measure.

We live in a world confronted by challenges that demand global responses. The relevance of the United Nations, the lodestar of multilateralism, over the past 72 years of its existence has always rested in its ability to reform and reinvent itself to respond more suitably to the challenges of the continuously changing world that it serves. Therefore, Mozambique supports the Secretary-General's efforts to pursue reform of the United Nations system in order to make it fit for purpose, and commends his demonstrated desire to fully consult and seek consent of the United Nations membership at each stage of the process.

In addition to the ongoing reforms, we also need to urgently accelerate Security Council reform, another element that will contribute to reaffirming the role of the United Nations in the quest for sustainable solutions to the peace and security challenges facing humankind. The difficulties stemming from the lack of consensus among members to initiate text-based negotiations to complete the reform of the Security Council constrain our ability to open a new window of opportunity that would enhance the credibility of the organ by making it more representative of the current reality. The Security Council is one of the fundamental pillars of the success of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the unconditional commitment of the Government of Mozambique to continuing to engage, in partnership with the United Nations and fellow Member States, in the search of sustainable solutions to the problems that affect the humanity. History has shown us that humankind thrives best when we, the peoples, are able to share, collaborate, cooperate, engage in dialogue and care.

The General Assembly will always be the platform where we renew our commitment and rededicate ourselves to the noble ideals on which this great Organization was founded — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Let us all stay loyal to these lofty ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and work together to transform our world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Martins (Angola): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, allow me to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on having been elected to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of Angola's full support in the fulfilment of his mission, so that he may successfully provide us with the leadership we need at this time.

I also congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, on the capable manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session; and Mr. António Guterres on his appointment to the post of Secretary-General. Allow me to wish Mr. Guterres every success in his mandate and assure him of the full support and cooperation of Angola.

As has been reiterated several times in this forum, peace and security are fundamental premises for stability, sustainable development, democracy and the promotion of and respect for human rights. The theme chosen for this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is timely and compels us to collectively reflect on the actions of the United Nations to solve the main problems affecting humankind.

We need an Organization capable of promoting international peace and security by acting swiftly to prevent potential conflict situations, improving the global strategy to combat international terrorism, and placing economic and social development issues at the centre of its action. In this context, we appreciate the relevance of the four axes defined in the agenda of this session, namely, the prevention and mediation of conflicts to achieve sustainable peace, the promotion of human rights, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

We reiterate Angola's support for the Secretary-General's proposals for reforms with a view to revitalizing and rationalizing the resources of the

Organization. The United Nations should act as the first instance in the promotion of peace diplomacy at the global level.

We also reiterate the need to reform the Security Council in order to have it reflect the reality of the contemporary world. Its current composition is outdated and needs to be urgently reformed. In line with the African position represented in the Ezulwini Consensus, Angola reiterates the need to increase the number of permanent members to ensure a fair geographical balance. It is unfair that the African continent, which accounts for almost 40 per cent of the States Members of the United Nations, is not represented among the permanent members in the main organ in charge of maintaining peace and security in the world.

Angola underlines the importance of multilateralism in solving global problems, in accordance with the logic of shared responsibility and benefits, in recognition of the legitimate interests of all and in concertation towards realistic solutions. Angola's attachment to multilateralism is strongly emphasized in its role in solving problems that threaten peace and security on the African continent, particularly in the Great Lakes region.

In the context of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Angola has been leading diplomatic efforts, with its regional and international partners, to find a lasting political solution capable of guaranteeing security, stability, economic and social development, and democracy for the countries and peoples of the region. This joint engagement has allowed for a substantial reduction of tensions in the region, with notable advances such as the continuation of the inter-Burundi dialogue, encouraging signs in the resolution of the political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and positive developments in the peace process in the Central African Republic, which have made it possible to hold elections in the country leading to the normalization of its institutions.

Despite these advances, we still have a long way to go on the path towards fully stabilizing that part of our continent, and the parties involved carry the main responsibility for ending the violence, respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the citizens of their respective countries, and building their national political institutions. In this context, they must demonstrate through action their commitment to and engagement with peace agreements and other political platforms either negotiated directly or sponsored by regional institutions and the international community.

The international community's collective action under the auspices of the United Nations should also cover the fight against terrorism. In this fight, a significant part of our effort should be directed at combating the causes of terrorism and violent extremism, which reside, inter alia, in the social crises in and the institutional fragility of many States. The case of Libya is a blatant example of this reality.

The African continent has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, which has killed innocent civilians, caused extensive damage to property and destroyed the way of life of many of its countries. Angola fully supports the efforts of the African Union, with the assistance of its international partners, to confront the scourge of terrorism.

Two years ago, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — an important instrument to guide the development strategies of our States. We hope that its implementation over the next 13 years will substantially reduce the major social deficiencies affecting developing nations in particular. The economic and financial difficulties affecting most countries have had a negative impact on the mobilization of financial resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially among the poorest, most vulnerable countries with limited internal resources. International efforts aimed at securing critical financial resources should be guided by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, adopted in 2015.

The Republic of Angola, which is now beginning a new cycle in its life as a nation, is strongly engaged in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, despite an adverse global economic environment. To that end, Angola has launched its national development plan, aimed at rehabilitating and modernizing economic and social infrastructure, promoting public and private investment, and enhancing training, qualification and the adequate management of human resources.

The world is moving towards consensus in recognizing the urgency of combating climate change. To this end, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is extremely important in the development of enabling tools for protecting the right to development and strengthening resilience in developing countries. Angola views the Agreement as a historic commitment

and an encouragement to contain global warming and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The urgent need for the world to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement has been dramatically highlighted by the recent climate-related disasters in various parts of the world. Angola joins in solidarity with the victims in the Caribbean, Mexico, the United States and other parts of the world.

In order to address this and other challenges facing the international community, Angola will continue to be a safe and responsible partner of the United Nations and contribute to the implementation of its agenda in an engaged manner. We are increasingly able and fit to play a decisive role in restoring peace and security, particularly in Africa, as well as in furthering its economic development. To that end, Angola has remained stable, and the pacification of the country has definitely been achieved.

The Republic of Angola recently held its third general elections in peacetime, in a climate of tranquillity, respect for differences and great civility, demonstrating the stability prevailing in the country and that the gradual consolidation of democracy is a fact. The priorities of the new Government will focus on economic development with particular attention on combating poverty, reducing inequalities, combating unemployment, and improving governance insufficiencies and development indicators as a sine qua non for building a prosperous and democratic society.

Regrettably, peace is still not prevalent in many regions. Concerning Guinea-Bissau, a country linked to Angola by historical and brotherly ties, we remain confident and expectant regarding the resolution of the political impasse. In this regard, we strongly support the efforts of all the Guinean, regional and international political and social actors, including the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

The issue of Western Sahara continues to merit the due attention of the United Nations to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant Security Council and African Union resolutions. Angola encourages the main parties involved to continue the dialogue in order to resolve the dispute, which has lasted too long.

In the Middle East, we are concerned about the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Angola argues that the solution lies in the acceptance and existence of two States, living side by side in peace and security.

The tension we are now witnessing in the Korean peninsula poses a very serious threat to international peace and security. Angola joins the voices advocating for a diplomatic solution and compliance with international non-proliferation instruments. The peoples of the region deserve to live in peace and not haunted by the spectre of a conflict whose effects would be devastating and unacceptable to the human conscience.

Angola promptly welcomed the steps taken to normalize relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America, which will benefit the two peoples. The complete lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo would contribute significantly to easing tensions between the two countries and would eliminate one of the last remnants of the Cold War. This would also bring about a more stable and peaceful environment for development in the Latin American region. This unilateral measure — the embargo — limits the Cuban people's enjoyment of development, and its extraterritorial effects violate the principles and norms of international law.

The promotion and protection of human rights have always been at the forefront of Angola's foreign priorities, as evidenced by the fact that it is a party to the main international human rights instruments and maintains an exemplary cooperation and ongoing dialogue with United Nations human rights mechanisms. It is in this context that Angola is a candidate for a seat on the Human Rights Council in the elections that will take place in October 2017. We look forward to participating actively in and contributing to the protection of human rights in the regions and countries most affected by violations of these rights. In this regard, we would highly appreciate the support of the members of the Assembly for our candidacy.

I would like to conclude by urging Member States to renew their confidence in the United Nations and strengthen international dialogue as a key element of a culture of peace, respect for differences among peoples, conflict prevention and the foundations of progress and development, to which all the peoples of the world have the right and are entitled.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Craig John Hawke, Chair of the Delegation of New Zealand.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): There is no greater demonstration of the ability of the United Nations to bring the world together than the opening of the General Assembly. The breadth of issues which are discussed in this Hall is immense. Often there are as many points of view as there are Member States, but ultimately we as an Organization share the common goal of making the world more peaceful and improving the lives of all of our peoples.

New Zealand is approximately 1,000 kilometres removed from its nearest neighbour in the Pacific, but our international connections are an intrinsic part of our identity and the foundation of our prosperity. We are an outward-looking nation that relies on global stability for our trade and the safety of our people. As a founding Member of the United Nations, New Zealand has always supported the leading role of the United Nations in a multilateral system, which fosters positive international relations.

Given the significant ongoing challenges to peace and security, the role of the United Nations in preventing and resolving conflict is as relevant now as ever. Among those challenges, North Korea presents some of the most pressing threats to international security in our time. The North Korean regime has consistently disregarded Security Council resolutions, the wishes of the international community and the well-being of its own people. In this past month alone, it has conducted its sixth nuclear test, launched a ballistic missile over Japan and carried out other ballistic-missile tests. Those provocative actions have directly undermined the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and that has serious wider implications.

As we saw during our recent term on the Security Council, the Council works most effectively when it acts as one. New Zealand supports the strong, unified responses by the Security Council, and we stand ready to work with Member States on measures that will fully reflect the consequences of North Korea's actions. We hope to see tensions defused and a path to dialogue developed. The goal of denuclearization requires eventual engagement with Pyongyang, but any dialogue must be meaningful and constructive, and must address the issues that most concern the international community. Until then, we join the rest of the international community in calling on North Korea to undertake immediate actions to de-escalate tensions, improve its humanitarian situation and abide by its international obligations.

The risks associated with nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation have been a key factor in New Zealand's long-standing commitment to international nuclear disarmament. Last week, we were pleased to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty represents an important step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

New Zealand is committed to playing its part to address global threats to peace and security. We have a history of contributing to efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, including through the United Nations. On the Security Council, New Zealand made determined efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria. Alongside Spain, Jordan and Egypt, we managed to renew and improve cross-border access arrangements. We consistently raised concerns about the Council's failure to bring about a political solution. Unspeakable crimes continue to be committed against the civilian population, and humanitarian access remains fraught. Only a sustainable peace based on an inclusive long-term political settlement can bring that needless conflict to an end.

In Iraq, New Zealand's defence force personnel are working to strengthen the capacity of Iraqi forces in their battle against Da'esh. We welcome the liberation of Mosul, Tal Afar and Nineveh province. That was an admirable achievement, and we acknowledge the sacrifice and commitment of the Iraqi security forces and Government. We note that the influence of Da'esh is not limited to Iraq and Syria, and that the defeat of Da'esh there will not spell the end of that group. New Zealand is focused on working with others in our near region — the Asia-Pacific — to ensure that groups like Da'esh do not inflict suffering in the way they have elsewhere.

In addition to security-based efforts, preventing and countering violent extremism in the first place is vital, and we are pleased to support international efforts in that regard. New Zealand has been contributing to Afghanistan's stability since 2001. We remain a committed partner of Afghanistan including through the NATO Resolute Support Mission. Ongoing support for Afghanistan from the international community is critical, given the scale and complexity of the challenges

ahead, but history has demonstrated in Afghanistan that no amount of international support can by itself bring about lasting peace and security. Afghanistan's future lies in the hands of its Government and people. We continue to call on the National Unity Government to prioritize the interests of the Afghan people above all else.

The United Nations is unique in its ability to convene the world so as to tackle problems that require collective action. The speed with which parties ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has demonstrated the strength of commitment to take meaningful action on climate change. New Zealand is among the many countries committed to the Paris Agreement. Progressing the Paris work programme is essential so as to deliver a framework that will ensure that the Agreement is robust, effective and credible, and that collective ambition will increase over time.

The Pacific is at the forefront of vulnerability to the effects of climate change. We are therefore pleased to support Fiji's presidency of this year's Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is a rare opportunity for the region to showcase its leadership in that area. We are an island nation within a vast Pacific Ocean. Our exclusive economic zone is 15 times larger than our land area. The sustainable management of our sea and our islands are of critical importance environmentally, economically and culturally.

Small island developing States face unique challenges and vulnerabilities. They are also great-ocean States and stewards of considerable ocean resources. New Zealand wants to assist those States in the sustainable management of oceans to ensure that our oceans are healthy and productive. We are making substantial investments to improve sustainable fisheries management in the Pacific and to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

We are also propelling a major increase in renewable energy generation in our region and further afield. New Zealand has taken a lead role in advocating internationally for the reform of fossil-fuel subsidies, which lead to wasteful consumption, put renewable energy at a disadvantage and depress investment in energy efficiency. We are exploiting alternative sources of development financing, including working with the private sector, tapping into the diaspora as a source of skills and investment, maximizing the value of remittances and increasing temporary labour market access.

New Zealand is supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in a wide range of areas, both domestically and internationally, including through our development assistance. We will continue to play our part in meeting the high level of ambition set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Pacific is an important part of how we define ourselves internationally. A strong and effective regional architecture, with the Pacific Islands Forum as the central regional body, is a key to Pacific success. New Zealand and was pleased with the outcomes of the recent Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, which had a strong focus on fisheries and climate change issues. Pacific leaders also agreed on the importance of fully implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions on North Korea, including by de-registering any North Korean trading or fishing vessels currently flagged in Pacific States' shipping registries.

New Zealand places significant value on the international rules-based order. Widely recognized rules, buttressed by an effective United Nations, are the best guarantors of our security and our economic well-being, particularly for small States. Such guarantees are also the best means of ensuring decent treatment and decent conditions for the world's citizens, and thereby reducing conditions that can lead to unrest, conflict and misery. But we all recognize that the United Nations can do better, and to do so it must be more relevant, effective and fit for purpose. The Secretary-General's reform agenda provides an opportunity for us to make that a reality. Important work lies ahead for us to reform the development, peace and security pillars.

Another critical element of making the United Nations more effective is management reform, including strengthening and modernizing its recruitment and management processes to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from its people. New Zealand looks forward to working together with the Secretary-General and all Member States. It is our sincere hope that reform can achieve our collective goal of better reflecting the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations and, ultimately, ensuring that the United Nations delivers better outcomes for our generation and those to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva, Chair of the Delegation of Turkmenistan.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to convey greetings and wishes for peace and prosperity to the peoples of the member States represented here from the President of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his important election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and I wish him success in his forthcoming work. I would also like to commend Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, for his active and effective activities in that position.

Guaranteeing international peace and security and protecting the legal and institutional foundations that are at the basis of the modern world order are the main task of the countries of the United Nations and of the largest international organizations, and that requires of them closer and more coordinated cooperation. The degree of effectiveness of such cooperation will in its turn largely determine the success of solutions to other global problems, including the environment, energy and food-related issues, combating terrorism, drug trafficking and other challenges.

Today the effective and uncompromising struggle against terrorism has become the imperative of global development. It is clear that terrorism in all its forms is a deliberate challenge to the civilized world. In point of fact, terrorism as a phenomenon threatens to undermine the entire system of global security and its political and moral foundations. We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and recognize that the prevention of terrorism is one of the most important components of ensuring national, regional and global security.

We welcome the important role of the United Nations in international efforts to combat terrorism. Supporting the efforts of the world community to create effective international counter-terrorism mechanisms. Turkmenistan therefore advocates the full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We believe that such work should be carried out everywhere — at the global, regional and national levels.

In that connection, we welcome the establishment of United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and we are ready to cooperate actively to further implement the Ashgabat Declaration, which was adopted at the outcome of the Central Asia-United Nations High-level Dialogue on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, held on 13 June 2017 in Turkmenistan.

Noting the role of preventive diplomacy in preventing conflicts, eliminating the causes that lead to conflict, establishing an atmosphere of trust among countries and creating positive conditions for effective cooperation among States on political, diplomatic, economic, social, environmental and other issues, Turkmenistan attaches particular importance to the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia that are aimed at achieving those objectives in the Central Asian region.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Regional Centre. Turkmenistan, together with Central Asian countries, intends to submit to the First Committee a draft resolution on supporting preventive diplomacy mechanisms in addressing urgent problems with the intention of supporting peace and security.

The conditions in the world and new challenges and threats to humankind dictate the need to reform the United Nations and to review its working methods in order to strengthen its timeliness and its ability to react to those threats. We support reforms and also the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is one of the key areas of our country's strategic cooperation with the United Nations. As a result of the comprehensive work that had been carried out jointly with the United Nations since October 2015 at the governmental level, the 17 Goals, 148 targets and 193 indicators of the SDGs were selected and adopted. To coordinate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals within the country, we have established a national mechanism for SDG implementation.

To organize training in the methodology related to issues of implementing the SDGs at the national, regional and international levels, we have opened a training and methodological centre within the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan, recognizing the importance of sport as a key factor for guaranteeing peace and sustainable development, again states its commitment to strengthening international sports cooperation.

Currently, in Ashgabat, the fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games are being held, with the participation of national teams from 65 countries, including 19 countries of Oceania, which are participating for the first time.

Expressing our firm commitment to the provisions of resolution 70/1, of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and recognizing the increasing role that sport plays in broadening the rights and opportunities of individuals and communities, Turkmenistan has initiated the participation of the refugee Olympic team in competitions, thereby reaffirming our country's commitment to the ideals of humanism, goodness, fairness and progress as anchored in the Charter of the United Nations.

We express our thanks to all countries for their support for the initiative of Turkmenistan and Brazil in that regard and for the adoption of the Joint Statement on Encouraging the Valuable Contribution of the Olympic Teams of Refugees to the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights at the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, on 15 September in Geneva. Pursuant to the Final Declaration of the International Sports Congress, entitled "Asian Games 2017: International Sport Cooperation for Peace and Development", published as an official document of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session (A/71/878, annex), Turkmenistan reaffirms its proposal to host, under the auspices of UNESCO, the seventh International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport.

Cooperation in the area of transport is a priority for our country in working with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Turkmenistan will continue to actively support the implementation of the decisions of the international community, in particular resolutions 69/213, of 2014, and 70/197, of 2015, aimed at forming new international transport and transit corridors and updating existing ones. As an important step towards the implementation of those documents, the Government of Turkmenistan suggested holding the first United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference, which took place in Ashgabat in November 2016, and welcomed the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Recalling that the Ashgabat Statement on Commitments and Policy Recommendations was adopted at the end of the Conference, and with the aim of successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Turkmenistan intends to submit to the Second Committee at the current session a draft resolution on strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ensuring sustainable and fair access to energy resources is one of the main tasks on the global 2030 Agenda. This year our country will chair the international Energy Charter Conference. In line with the plans for our chairmanship, Turkmenistan has this year undertaken a range of measures to revitalize the process of developing new international legal mechanisms in the field of sustainable energy. In that context, we welcome the creation of an international expert group on energy security and sustainable energy and invite States to take active part in the work of the Energy Charter Conference, which will be held on 28 and 29 November in Ashgabat.

One of our main objectives is to participate actively in international efforts to deal with the most important issues of environmental protection, including the management of water resources. In the light of Turkmenistan's chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), we propose holding a summit in 2018 in Turkmenistan, with the Heads of the Founder States of IFAS, which would include the participation of specialized international structures such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

We once again state our country's readiness to seek out new approaches and ways to overcome the challenges faced by humankind and reaffirm our firm commitment to cooperation with the United Nations, which was and remains a strategic priority and a practical foundation for all of our activities in the international arena.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly and congratulate the President on his election, and to express our willingness to contribute to the success of his term.

I wish first of all to emphasize Peru's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, to international peace and security, to sustainable development and to human rights, and to the achievement of sustainable peace. For that, we need to strengthen multilateralism, dialogue and cooperation.

For Peru, the United Nations is essential for building a peaceful and sustainable future, facing global challenges such as climate change, terrorism or corruption, and strengthening international governance in order to obtain a more humane, open and inclusive globalization. Peru is preparing to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the biennium 2018-2019. Our vocation for peace and respect for international law, effective collective security and adherence to the peaceful settlement of disputes will be the guiding principles of our action.

We are a developing country that has suffered terrorism at first hand. We are a firm defender of human rights and a promoter of democracy and the rule of law. We will give special attention to consolidating sustainable peace and preventing conflicts and humanitarian crises.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possible access of terrorist groups to them are real threats. That is why we have signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we hope that all States possessing such weapons will adhere to that instrument.

We condemn the nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which today constitute the greatest threat to international peace and security. In the Security Council, we will support efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks in order to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

Peru reaffirms its commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and its implementation. Our country is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, which is seen in ocean warming, shrinking glaciers and the impact on the availability of water resources, the loss of biodiversity and other extreme phenomena. Climate change is a real threat that knows no borders. So far this year Peru has suffered from the rain and flooding of the coastal El Niño, and the Caribbean and the United States have suffered a series of devastating hurricanes. That is why we support the initiative of President Emmanuel Macron of France to establish a Global Pact for the Environment.

Peru is also committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Accordingly, we presented our first voluntary national review in July, reporting on our progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda in line with our national priorities, circumstances and needs. Peru promotes, from a focus on rights, a social revolution aimed at eradicating poverty through quality public services. Ensuring access to water and sanitation is the first priority of our Government, which accounts for the participation of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in the High-level Panel on Water.

In line with the 2030 Agenda, we believe that corruption is also a global threat, one that erodes democratic governance and legal stability in our countries, diverts resources needed to finance development, generates disenchantment and mistrust in institutions and increases inequality. Aware of the need to confront that scourge together, Peru has proposed that democratic governance and the fight against corruption be the central themes of the Summit of the Americas to be held in Lima next April, with a view to adopting concrete measures to strengthen institutions and combat impunity.

The adoption of the standards and good practices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — which Peru aspires to join before 2021, the year of our bicentennial as an independent nation — will also contribute to strengthening our institutions and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Peruvians believe that democracy is indispensable for stability, peace, development and the defence and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Guided by that conviction, my country led the process that culminated in the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001.

In our region, democracy is an inalienable right, which is why Peru remains profoundly concerned with the rupture of the democratic order and humanitarian crisis happening in Venezuela, as well as by the infringements on and abuses of citizens that have been reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The solution to the grave crisis in Venezuela must be peaceful and be negotiated by the Venezuelans themselves. Any attempt, internal or external, to resort to force violates the principles of the

Charter of the Organization and undermines genuine interest in defending democracy and respect for the rule of law, both domestically and internationally.

Along those lines, the Lima Group believes that the initiative of the Dominican Republic to bring together the Government and the opposition should be developed with good faith, rules, objectives, clear deadlines and guarantees of compliance, for which international accompaniment is essential.

To conclude, I wish to convey to the General Assembly that Peru will continue to work constructively to solve the problems we face and to bring about the future that our peoples long for and deserve.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in the name of the constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, and thus in the name of a sovereign, peace-loving people that believes in respect among nations and compliance with the purest and truest principles of international law — the Bolivarian people of Venezuela.

In the nineteenth century, the liberating army of Simón Bolivar left its country not to conquer or dominate, but rather to help brotherly peoples achieve their independence, so that later they could return home with the satisfaction of having been useful in the cause of liberty and equality. That is the spirit that characterizes our people and the actions of our revolutionary Government during such difficult times for humankind. That is why we will always uphold the Bolivarian diplomacy of peace.

Indeed, we are in the house of peace, the home of peaceful solutions and the land of international law and its principles. We are embraced and upheld by the Charter of the United Nations, a noble multilateral instrument to avoid war and injustices. Thus this rostrum should be respected, protected and cared for by nations. It is an all but sacred podium for the peoples that espouse peace and understanding.

However, this House, one of multilaterialism and respect for the equality of peoples and States, has been defiled, disrespected and offended, time and time again, by arrogant Powers that seek to impose their unilateral rules of the game — rules of war, suffering and pain. That was denounced in this very place, in a resounding voice and an incomparable manner, by Commander Hugo Chávez in 2006 (see A/61/PV.12). Everyone will recall his remark, that it smelled of sulphur in here. It continues to smell of sulphur. He tried to sound the alarm to generate the necessary restraint to confront the serious unilateral threats then threatening world peace.

Nevertheless, a week ago this Hall (see A/72/PV.3) — and the world, by way of the media — bore witness to yet another dangerous desecration of the principles and objectives of the United Nations. The emperor of the world, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, used this platform built for peace to announce wars, the total destruction of Member States and the implementation of unilateral and illegal coercive measures. He threatened and judged at will, as if he had absolute dictatorial powers over the sovereign States Members of our Organization. Paradoxically, in a display of brazenness and political hypocracy, Donald Trump based his attacks against humankind on such values as peace and prosperity.

In our case, we recall that former President Barack Obama, who had a different style but the same goal, declared the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States. That was in an executive order on 9 May 2015. Today, we are obliged to declare before the world that our country was directly threatened by the President of the United States with the use of the most powerful military force that has ever existed in the history of humankind. That was on 11 August this year.

As a complement to such anachronism and an offence to our sovereignty and to the peace that has always characterized our Latin America and the Caribbean, the Trump Administration imposed illegal economic sanctions on our economy on 25 August, with a view to making our people suffer and forcing undemocratic changes to our system of government. In his statement last week Donald Trump appealed to the antiquated ideological rhetoric of the Cold War, to the best inquisitorial style of Richard Nixon and Senator Joseph McCarthy, to reiterate his threats against our country and our sister Republic of Cuba. Venezuela will always seek mutually respectful dialogue with the United States Government. However, as the free people that we are, we stand ready to defend our sovereignty, our independence and our democracy in any scenario and by any way.

Given such attitudes, the United Nations should establish effective mechanisms to neutralize warlike pretences and intentions to supplant multilaterialism, which has cost us so much to consolidate, with the dictatorial unilateralism of those who intend, through the use of arms and economic blackmail, to impose destruction and a single way of thinking on our diverse and heterogeneous humankind. In that connection, last Tuesday the 120 members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — two thirds of the General Assembly — unanimously adopted the Political Declaration of New York as a tool for denunciation, condemnation and joint action against coercive and unilateral measures that certain international actors impose in frank violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

In our statement on behalf of the presidency of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the plenary session of the Group of 77 and China last Thursday, we proposed that the New York Political Declaration be extended to that group of countries, which focuses on economic affairs, because the merciless and unilateral attacks against the economies of our peoples form an essential part of those illegal, unilateral and coercive measures. We must urgently seek multilateral responses to avoid the imposition of coercive measures whereby Governments that have imposed them illegally have a legal obligation to compensate the peoples who have suffered from their effects. In that regard, we condemn all unilateral actions against brotherly nations, such as Russia and Iran, in particular the extension of the criminal blockade against the brotherly Republic of Cuba, which has been in effect for more than five decades and, at this time, clearly reflects the new winds of United States unilateralism.

Venezuela firmly opposes the existence of nuclear weapons on our planet. Their possession exposes humankind to unimaginable and unjustifiable anguish and risks. We therefore signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last Wednesday. We must make a supreme effort so that nuclear crises are de-escalated and vanish — hopefully along with their weapons — through dialogue and humanist reason.

In the area of human rights as well, Venezuela — which over the past several years has worked tirelessly to ensure the broadest form of social investment, redistributing with justice its national wealth among Venezuelan men and women so as to ensure their human and social rights — has been targeted and accused by the United States Government. If there is any country that is not worthy of membership in the Human Rights Council, it is precisely the United States of America. It is the main violator of human rights, not only on its own territory, but throughout the world, including through unjustified wars, the bombing of civilian populations, clandestine imprisonment accompanied by various forms of torture, the imposition of unilateral and unlawful measures against economies in several countries, various kinds of economic pressure, and rash migration policies. It is the only country that has dared to use nuclear weapons against another people. It is a country that, violating the fundamental institutional framework of the United Nations, led the invasion of Iraq in 2003 on the grounds that it was searching for weapons of mass destruction that they never found, notwithstanding the more than 1 million deaths caused by that bloody military operation.

The United States is building a wall on its border with Mexico, and there is proposed legislation to impose a 7 per cent tax on immigrants' income to fund not their social security but the construction of that shameful wall.

Based on verifiable data from United Nations agencies and rapporteurs, we can note the following. The United States has not ratified 62 per cent of the principal treaties concerning human rights. In the United States, there is no independent institution for the defence and promotion of human rights. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has condemned the lack of independence of the United States judiciary. Solitary confinement is widespread practice in this country. The number of homeless people has reached 3.5 million, including 1.5 million boys and girls. Some 28 per cent of those living in poverty have no health-care coverage. The maternal mortality rate has skyrocketed in recent years. Some 10,000 children are incarcerated in adult prisons, and children can be sentenced to life imprisonment. Of those who have been condemned to life, 70 per cent are African-American. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education has condemned the use of electric shocks and physical coercion in study centres.

The United States is one of the seven countries in the world that has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the United States, paid maternity leave is not mandatory. Allegations of police abuses, in

particular against the African-American community, are commonplace. More than 10 million African Americans continue to live in poverty, half of them live in situations of severe poverty. In a country in which slavery was supposed to have been abolished, the thirteenth amendment allows for slavery in the form of criminal conviction. One in three American indigenous women will undergo rape in her lifetime. We are discussing a country in which racial discrimination is not only unsurpassed, but one in which it is growing alongside the supremacist positions of the current Administration. Please excuse all the details, but there are things that we must know that the media hides.

Venezuela condemns terrorism in all its forms, whether perpetrated by the violent anarchist groups that today threaten world peace and stability or by States that assume the right to intervene throughout the world, gaining control of strategic natural resources through the use of military force with no compassion for civilians. It pains us to see how the Mediterranean Sea has become an immense cemetery, often before the blind eye and incompetence of States bearing partial responsibility for the crises generated in the migrants' countries of origin, owing to a combination of both forms of terrorism.

Incited and bloody wars like the prefabricated ones against Syria and Libya only leave behind desolation and division. Fortunately, with the support of their righteous international allies, the heroic Syrian Government and people are coming closer to a definitive victory against terrorist groups every day. Venezuela hopes for the success of the work of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in his role as head coordinator of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Venezuela hopes that that work will also condemn State terrorism.

Venezuela encourages the resumption of peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel, which must lead to a lasting and durable peace between the two States and recognizing as the borders of Palestine those that existed in 1967, in conformity with international law, as well as establishing East Jerusalem as its capital. We believe that the United Nations must assume a much greater proactive role in resolving that historic and unjust conflict.

We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his sincere efforts in facilitating the implementation of the Geneva Agreement through the good-offices mechanism so as reach a practical solution, satisfactory to the parties, in the case of the ongoing territorial dispute between ourselves and our brothers and neighbours in the cooperative Republic of Guyana.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will always be willing to help open the path of peace. We therefore commend the implementation of the peace agreements between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, to which both Commander Chávez and President Nicolás Maduro Moros devoted so much energy and effort. Likewise, we will continue to facilitate the talks between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional that are under way in the Republic of Ecuador.

Venezuela is not a drug-producing country, as international agencies have certified. We cooperate in a sovereign capacity with all neighbouring and non-neighbouring countries in countering drug trafficking. We express our concern about the increase in drug production in the neighbouring country of Colombia. However, we have always affirmed that consumer countries bear the primary responsibility, as they account for the incentives underlying both drug production and drug trafficking, and they must assume genuine control of the entry and distribution of drugs within their territories.

Since we have been working for many years with the United Nations Development Programme, Venezuela's path towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is simple, because our Plan de la Patria en Marcha and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development not only coincide, but they are also complementary instruments.

In terms of their financing, everyone knows that over the past 18 years, 76 per cent of Venezuela's revenue has been dedicated to social investment, and that will continue to increase. No economic attack or illegal sanction will prevent President Maduro from continuing and developing policies that ensure the social rights of our fellow citizens. Yes, we are concerned about the obvious lack of sources of funding for both our brotherly countries and for those that last year expressed their willingness to comply with the 2030 Agenda although they lack the funds required to do so. The United Nations must commit to guaranteeing that worthy funding for the comprehensive and sustainable development of all Member States.

It may be no coincidence that days before and during this seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the effects of the frequently warned of and feared climate change have manifested themselves through the devastation and death caused by consecutive hurricanes of magnitudes never previously seen. Those occurred not too far from New York. The unprecedented wrath of those natural phenomena has affected our brothers and sisters in several Caribbean countries.

The Prime Ministers of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, and of Dominica, Roosevelt Skerrit, made two extraordinary statements to the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.14 and A/72/PV.19, respectively) in which they bravely and emotionally expressed the most absolute truths and alerted us to the need for concrete, joint and urgent action to avoid greater havoc being wreaked by those phenomena, which are undeniably caused by climate change. Roosevelt Skerrit said that those small countries are becoming the victims of a war that they did not choose, did not start and are not part of. It is the war of developed countries and the capitalist system against our Mother Nature. Today, with greater emphasis than ever before, we recall the motto of environmental and conservationist social movements: let us not change the climate; let us change the system.

Restoring physical infrastructure and using construction techniques that are resistant to the hardships of new natural phenomena cannot fall to the affected countries and people. It is also a shared and differentiated responsibility that must be borne principally by the countries that pollute the most and thereby contribute to climate change. In that context, and in the light of the consequences that we have witnessed, we find it extraordinary and hostile that the Government of the United States, the most polluting country, intends to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which, while not a panacea, is a collective step forward to mitigating the effects of climate change. How many hurricanes, typhoons, landslides, droughts and cases of subsidence; how many deaths, injured people and devastated countries are needed to ascertain that climate change, as stated by the experts of our very own United Nations, is a threat to the entire planet and that it is everyone's responsibility to reverse it?

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela offers its condolences to the Governments and families affected by the successive hurricanes in the Caribbean and the United States, as well as the victims of the terrible earthquakes in our sister nation, Mexico. While we have sought to deal immediately and in solidarity with the emergencies in our region, President Nicolás Maduro will continue to provide the necessary support, not only that which is at our disposal, but everything we can help coordinate and direct in order to assist our friends and brothers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As I said at the beginning of this statement, the Venezuelan people are subject to constant aggression by hegemonic Powers who seek to seize our natural resources — no more and no less than the world's largest oil reserve and one of the most important gas reserves, as well as our gold, diamond, coltan, iron, aluminium and thorium reserves and our biological diversity, water resources and fertile lands, among others. We have suffered multifaceted attacks against our economy, our currency and our production capacity. The attacks have included the induced generation of internal political violence by political factions that have tried to accede to power by undemocratic means since 2002.

This year, we suffered four months of political violence, once again aimed at overthrowing President Maduro. After the tension and pain of the unjustifiable deaths, the opposition violence was neutralized and appeased by the great democratic and popular demonstration on 30 July, in which more than 8 million Venezuelans came out to vote for peace and to elect a civil, sovereign and plenipotentiary National Constituent Assembly.

Those latest acts of violence by the Venezuelan extreme right took place on the very same 30 July in an effort to prevent people from going out to vote. Total political peace returned to the country from 31 July. We are witnesses to constituent peace. Our National Constituent Assembly, in coexistence with and respect for the rest of the constituted powers, has become not only a peacemaker and protector of the people, but also a quintessential instrument for national dialogue on and legitimate attention to the country's most urgent problems.

We have an active and popular democracy. We in Venezuela have organized 22 elections in 18 years. The revolution has triumphed in 20 of those elections. We have always developed social dialogue as a method of deepening our democracy. That is why we also welcome the fact that the Venezuelan political opposition has decided to redirect itself along the democratic

pathway and in line with the Constitution, through the participation of all its parties in the gubernatorial elections on 15 October.

We celebrate the fact that President Danilo Medina of the Dominican Republic, former President Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain, and former President Leonel Fernández of the Dominican Republic have adopted and defined the dialogue initiative that President Maduro announced just after the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly, and have summoned the parties to a process to which Nicaragua, Bolivia, Mexico and Chile have joined. We are grateful for the sincere support of those friendly countries and Governments, in order to promote the only possible solution — a peaceful, constitutional and sovereign solution that is built by all Venezuelans.

In these times of turmoil in the world, we want to see a United Nations that is truly united. Any reform process must take place with the participation and inclusion of all its Members. We need a United Nations that is truly effective in neutralizing violent and unilateral initiatives, as we stated moments ago, and that is able to work together with all Member States, without hegemonic bias. We need a United Nations system that identifies and warns of the true causes of the greatest problems humankind suffers today, and attends to them with no distractions or pressures that may be costly, while always respecting the principles of our founding Charter of the United Nations.

It is time for definitions. The historical struggle between healthy multilateralism and perverse unilateralism is at its peak. Let us make decisions that always bear in mind those who are most humble, the excluded, those who need us most, our Mother Nature. Let us be able to look into the eyes of our children and our grandchildren with the satisfaction of having halted the worst and guaranteed them a better future of peace, health and happiness. Let us build, through the United Nations, that which the Liberator asked of us in 1815 — a Government system that grants us the greatest possible amount of happiness, social security and political stability.

From this house of multilateralism, we say, may multilateralism live. From this place of international law, may international law live; from this home of peace, may world peace live. From the heart of Venezuela, rely on the Bolivarian Government of President Nicolás Maduro to close ranks on justice, humanism and peace. As the Liberator wrote on 13 April 1823 to the then President of Peru, José de la Riva Agüero, "I am inclined to think that, when it is essential, love for the homeland will triumph". Likewise, we hold the unwavering and unrelenting certainty that under any circumstances, love of our sovereign, peaceful and Bolivarian Venezuela, love of our working people, love of our good people and love of the homeland, will triumph. Peace will triumph and prevail. We will always triumph.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tore Hattrem, Chair of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session.

The world has experienced unprecedented progress during the past decades. Extreme poverty has been more than halved, people live longer, child mortality rates are falling, and more girls attend school that ever before. Global and political cooperation, trade and shared rules of the road have brought us to where we are today.

I would like to highlight four building blocks that are crucial for a sustainable future. The first is that our core interests are common to us all, and we can achieve more when we act together. The second is that there can be no security without development and no development without security. The first universal road map for development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is premised on that holistic perspective. The third is that our security and welfare depend on our ability to uphold international law. Good global and national governance and the rule of law are decisive for sustainable development. The fourth is that protectionism and isolationism will put our shared development into reverse. We need more trade and cooperation, not less. We cannot afford to shake the very foundations that our open, global economic order is based on. It is vital that we demonstrate our shared commitment to a rules-based, multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. The WTO remains our best chance of creating a level playing field. We will all benefit from open, predictable and enforceable rules and commitments for all. It will be crucial to achieve a substantive outcome at the WTO's Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December. That will be the litmus test.

As nations, our core interests are shared. We all want peace, security and welfare for our citizens. We have only one planet, and every nation's and every citizen's security and welfare depend on our ability to protect our natural environment and climate. We cannot allow inactivity and unsustainable practices to prevail. The good news is that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have given us a universal development agenda. The Sustainable Development Summit, which took place in this Hall two years ago, represented a pinnacle of global governance and a defining moment for our common future. At that Summit, world leaders decided to put sustainability first.

Preventing and addressing war, conflict and humanitarian crises are crucial to sustainability. Norway strongly supports Secretary-General Guterres's vision for the United Nations. Every tool and institution within the United Nations system must be realigned to improve our ability to prevent conflict and make and sustain peace. Respect for fundamental human rights is critical if we are to build resilient, prosperous and peaceful societies. Investing in human rights today will prevent conflicts tomorrow.

I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the then Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. It came about as a result of the courage and hard work of the parties, supported by international partners and a united Security Council. Norway is proud to have contributed to the process as a guarantor. The point I want to make is that the Colombian success story is propelling sustainable development forward both within and outside the nation's borders. The Final Agreement between the parties also addresses issues of general global interest, such as fighting illicit drug trafficking and deforestation in former conflict areas. The Colombian process has been the most inclusive peace process in history. Ensuring inclusivity in conflict resolution is both the right and the smart thing to do, and experience shows that women's participation in peace processes tends to increase the chances of sustainable peace.

Stability in the Middle East and North Africa is another issue of common interest to the international community, and it will be crucial to achieve regional stability, improve States' capacity to govern and increase cooperation between States in the region. The Norwegian leadership of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee donor group for Palestine is an example of how institutional and economic development can underpin efforts to resolve a conflict politically.

Development assistance should play a more catalytic role in our shared global campaign for sustainable development by building capacity for generating domestic revenue, strengthening the delivery of public services, stimulating trade and job-creating investments and enabling individuals to take responsibility for their future into their own hands. That is why investing in education, particularly for girls, is the most effective way of promoting sustainable development, and why we are working hard to promote education globally. Norway has doubled its aid to global education over the past four years.

Education creates stability and hope for children and young people in conflict areas. Preventing gaps in children's education is also important for post-conflict reconstruction and development. That is why Norway has significantly increased its contribution to education in emergencies, with 8 per cent of our humanitarian budget now dedicated to education. Norway has helped to initiate the Education Cannot Wait fund, whose purpose is to facilitate global funding to keep children in school during conflicts and crises. Schools must also be protected from attacks, which is why Norway has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and encourages others to do the same.

Further increases in both domestic and external financing will be needed if we are to attain SDG 4, on quality education for all. Last year, the Education Commission, initiated and supported by Norway, delivered a report with recommendations for increasing financing for education, including funding for the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait and a new initiative, the International Finance Facility for Education. Norway has doubled its support for global education through the Global Partnership over the past four years, and we are committed to working with partners to ensure that the funding for it is successfully replenished.

The fight against terrorism is a core interest that we all share. Groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) cannot be allowed to challenge our free and open societies. Together we are making decisive progress against ISIL in Syria and Iraq, and we can now look forward to a time when ISIL will be defeated territorially. Norway is making significant contributions to the international coalition in every way

it can, and we are also providing humanitarian relief to those affected. We have disbursed $500 million for the Syria crisis since 2016, which means that we are on track to fulfil the pledge we made at the London donor conference. We must now strengthen our efforts to secure sustainable peace in those areas, and the Security Council must step up and take responsibility. We should increase our efforts to alleviate other large-scale humanitarian crises, such as those in Yemen, South Sudan and the Lake Chad basin.

We also need a strong, unified Security Council to help us deal with the North Korean nuclear-weapon programme and ballistic-missile tests. A political solution will be crucial to ensuring the security of us all.

Our shared commitment to sustainable development includes the commitment to leaving no one behind. Norway's humanitarian assistance this year, which amounts to approximately $650 million, supports that cause. Today 142 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, the highest number since the end of the Second World War. Many of the current humanitarian crises are conflict-related, and it is more important than ever to ensure the protection of civilians in such circumstances. We are very concerned about the lack of respect being shown for international humanitarian law. We underline the obligation of all the parties to a conflict to protect civilians and ensure safe, unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need. Norway is working actively to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law among parties to armed conflicts.

Putting sustainability first means acting together to save the oceans. We applaud the Secretary-General for appointing the first-ever Special Envoy for the Ocean. We congratulate Mr. Lajčák's predecessor as President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson, on his appointment to that important job and wish him every success in galvanizing global efforts to protect the world's oceans. If we are to be able to harvest resources from the oceans in the future, we must ensure that they are clean and healthy. And it is important for small island developing States — also known as large-ocean States — to join forces to find good solutions that promote the health and sustainability of our oceans. It was against that backdrop that Norway hosted a meeting at the United Nations this week to explore the enormous range of opportunities that sustainable oceans can provide.

The President returned to the Chair.

In conclusion, the United Nations is the backbone of our global order, and we need a strong and healthy back to address and resolve the challenges the world is facing today. We know that we can do it together. The United Nations provided the leadership that united the countries of the world through the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which was an important step towards ensuring the sustainability of our planet. We were also able to come together in Addis Ababa in 2015 and agree on a framework for financing sustainable development, which will be crucial to our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. There are many shared challenges that still have to be solved, while at the same time we must safeguard all that we have already accomplished together. Those are the tasks that we have to tackle together in the General Assembly.

Norway has actively supported the United Nations since it was founded. Through seven decades and changing Norwegian Governments, we have worked tirelessly in and with the United Nations for our common interests. Norway is a candidate for membership in the Security Council for the period from 2021 to 2022, and we are counting on the support of the States Members of the United Nations for our candidature.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Maria Helena Lopes de Jesus Pires, Chair of the Delegation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations.

Ms. Pires (Timor-Leste) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Francisco Guterres Lú-Olo, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

> "At the outset, I would like to congratulate President Miroslav Lajčák on his election and wish him every success in carrying out his duties. I welcome the theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, 'Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet'. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding are without a doubt the tasks of our generation. I am confident that the President's capable leadership, together with that of Secretary-General António Guterres, will encourage and inspire our strong commitment and help us succeed in our common objective.

"It is a happy coincidence that I have been given the opportunity to address the General Assembly today, the same day on which, 18 years ago, the first members of the International Force in East Timor arrived in my country from Australia and New Zealand. The arrival on 20 September 1999 of that United Nations-mandated Force paved the way for our attainment of national independence, which a majority of the Timorese people voted for in a referendum on self-determination held under United Nations supervision. On behalf of the Timorese people, I reiterate my gratitude to the United Nations and to all the civilians and military officers under the flag of the United Nations who protect innocent people and save lives.

"Another happy coincidence is that there is another key player in the process that led to the self-determination of the Timorese people among us today — Secretary-General António Guterres. The determined efforts of Mr. Guterres, then Prime Minister of Portugal, guided by his values and ethical imperatives, were decisive in ensuring that today Timor-Leste is considered a joint success story for the Timorese people and the United Nations.

"The history of Timor-Leste is a vivid reminder that when the values of civilization, on which the very existence of the United Nations is founded, lead us and inspire our decisions on the international scene, the United Nations and international law become powerful and decisive forces for settling conflicts and restoring peace. This year Timor-Leste is celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the restoration of its independence, on 20 May 2002. Over the past 15 years, the partnerships we have established with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and development partners have produced important and inspiring results. We have achieved what few thought possible.

"The mortality rates of children under the age of 5 have fallen by half. According to the World Health Organization, Timor-Leste succeeded in reducing malaria rates from 220 out of 1,000 cases in 2006 to one in 1,000 in 2012. In 2002 there were 19 doctors in Timor-Leste; today we have nearly 1,000, trained thanks to the cooperation and solidarity of the people and the Government of Cuba. We have doctors in every village and several new hospitals. My country has been declared leprosy-free by the World Health Organization for the first time in centuries. In 2002, life expectancy at birth was 60 years; today it has reached 68.5.

"We consider education, like health care, a key priority. Our primary-education enrolment rates stand at nearly 100 per cent of school-age children and youth. We have recently introduced a new curriculum at the primary-school level and we given special priority in the past few years to building new schools and improving school equipment, with the primary objective of these and many other measures being improving the quality of public schools.

"The progress we have made is reflected in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index, in which our score during the past six years has averaged 0.610. In 2002, it was 0.375.

"The State of Timor-Leste has also undertaken initiatives to increase women's participation in and contribution to the process of social and economic development, including by enacting legal measures against discrimination. Many East Timorese women occupy important positions in Government, the justice system, other public institutions and civil society. A third of the members of Timor-Leste's national Parliament are women. However, ensuring that women are protected against exploitation and violence, as well as giving full recognition to their role in society, still requires the Government's attention.

"The Timorese people's most important achievement during the past 15 years has been in building peace and reconciliation at both the national and international levels. Peace and reconciliation have been made possible thanks to the vision of our national leaders and the courage of Timorese society as a whole to reject vengeance and genuinely adhere to that vision.

"We have established solid relations of friendship and close cooperation with Indonesia and Australia. We are working to further strengthen our relations with our neighbours in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to which we have submitted our application for membership. Strengthening Timor-Leste's regional integration is a key priority of our foreign policy.

"In Timor-Leste, now that peace and stability have been achieved, we are putting our efforts into creating better conditions for economic and social development. In particular, we have improved development conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises and the private sector, and we are promoting the diversification of the non-oil economy. This year we also strengthened democracy through our most recent presidential and legislative elections, which were organized entirely by the Timorese people.

"We believe that a key condition for the development of the country is ensuring stable and solid institutions that provide quality public services. This is why my country supported the inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. We believe that there can be no development without peace, and the importance of peace for development is a priority for us that has been reflected in Timor-Leste's commitment to establishing the g7+ since 2009. The g7+ brings together a couple of dozen States that are emerging from conflict or in a situation of fragility. The Group's action has had tangible, positive results in relationships with development partners and in bilateral and multilateral cooperation. We have seen these mutual advantages in the cooperation that has resulted among fragile States in relevant areas such as peace and reconciliation, the management of natural resources and the stewardship of public finances. Many of the member States of the g7+ have also hosted or are hosting United Nations peacekeeping missions, putting them in the privileged position of being able to share their valuable experience with regard to areas of peacekeeping that have been successful and those that need improvement.

"Our national experience has taught us to value multilateralism as an important instrument for responding to challenges within the international system, but that is not the only reason we value it. Another is the 2030 Agenda, which embodies multilateralism's potential for improving the planet and the well-being of its peoples. The 2030 Agenda has benefited from the overall experience of the process of the Millennium Development Goals, and its success will benefit the many millions who have been deprived of basic human rights through poverty. Only through dialogue, negotiation, multilateral cooperation and respect for democracy can we meet the ambitious goals we have established for 2030.

"Today the international community is facing unprecedented challenge that require multilateral cooperation and a global response. Climate change is already having a growing impact on the development conditions for society and on the future of the planet. The effect on food security, among other things, is central to our concerns and has been the target of several Government measures, including within the scope of multilateral cooperation in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, which we recently had the honour of presiding over. For small island developing States, the effects of climate change represent an existential issue that requires attention and effort from us all.

"International cooperation in the fight against transnational crime at all levels is a top priority for Timor-Leste. We, the international community, have an inalienable duty to work to realize the values of civilization enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and its conventions. Timor-Leste is a participant in a number of important multilateral processes for regional and international stability and security, and we will continue to expand and deepen that participation.

"The world is facing threats that were unimaginable when the United Nations was first established. The Organization must be capable of responding to the new challenges facing humankind. In that context, I would like to express Timor-Leste's full support for the ongoing reform process led by the Secretary-General, particularly with regard to the United Nations development system and its management of areas such as peacekeeping, security, gender parity and strategies against sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as his recent establishment of a High-level Advisory Board on Mediation and the Office of Counter-Terrorism

"The world is currently confronting two huge threats to international peace, the hotbeds of war in the Middle East and the nuclearization of the Korean peninsula and escalating tensions there. My country urges all the parties involved, in both regions, to show the greatest possible restraint in

order to avoid any steps that could aggravate the situation. Timor-Leste calls on all the parties to fully respect the relevant international conventions and Security Council resolutions. In particular, I call for dialogue and negotiation to help defuse the tensions and promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the Korean peninsula. Timor-Leste supports non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and is in the process of signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which it expects to conclude in the near future.

"My country welcomes the prospect of the holding of an intergovernmental conference on migration next year and considers it urgent to improve the coordination of the international community and the quality of the shelter for these massive movements of migrants and refugees. We must also tackle the root of the problem by increasing development opportunities in depressed regions and reducing the drivers of migration flows.

"Ensuring that the people of Western Sahara can finally exercise their right to self-determination continues to be postponed. For 26 years, the Sahrawi have been peacefully waiting for the parties to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions. I call for dialogue between the Kingdom of Morocco, the legitimate representatives of the Sahrawi people and the United Nations aimed at arriving at a solution as soon as possible that can ensure the holding of a referendum on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. I also call for the lifting of the embargo on the Republic of Cuba, an anachronistic situation that the international community has broadly rejected.

"I am very pleased to inform the General Assembly that Timor-Leste and Australia have made important and decisive progress in the talks on the demarcation of our shared maritime border. Timor-Leste initiated the settlement process required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in April of last year. This mechanism, initiated for the first time in history, has enabled both countries to recently agree in principle on the central elements of the delimitation of the maritime borders of the Timor Sea. It has reaffirmed our faith in the ability of the international legal system, and in particular the United Nations, to support all States. We want to point out that thanks to the United Nations and its procedures, it will now be possible for us to take one of our final steps towards achieving full sovereignty. We also hope that in these times of global complexity and uncertainty, our success in that process will set a small but positive example for the international community.

"In conclusion, I would like to emphasize Timor-Leste's commitment to the multilateral system. Timor-Leste will continue to cooperate closely and at every level with efforts to maintain regional and international security and stability. Our people greatly appreciate the support of the international community."

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, please accept warm greetings from our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, our Vice-President, Rosario Murillo, and the people of Nicaragua, who wish you success in the great responsibility that you have taken on.

Many of the issues on the agenda during this session are of vital importance to the survival of our peoples. This year we have witnessed a world in upheaval, driven by multiple crises, including violations of international law and the sovereignty of our peoples, wars and threats of the use of force, and increased poverty and inequality. However, before I go into them, I would like to share my President's reflections summarizing the political will and course of action that must guide us if we are to achieve a better and more peaceful world.

"We must uphold the commitment to continuing to fight for peace, which is the global priority of all of our peoples, and to ensuring that the conflicts that arise in various parts of the world can be overcome through dialogue and negotiation. Above all, we must ensure that we are free from the use or the threat of the use of force, which is what our peoples desire the most from the peoples of the great Powers towards countries with small populations — countries that may be small in development but that are great in their values and history."

That should be the permanent commitment of the United Nations.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Nicaragua, I would like to express our solidarity with all the brothers and sisters of the Greater Caribbean — Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and all the other islands affected by the recent devastating meteorological events that are becoming more intense and more frequent every day — and with our brothers and sisters the people and the Government of Mexico, for the two catastrophic earthquakes that occurred there. Our condolences and prayers go to all of the families who have lost loved ones and to the people and the Government of the United States for the hurricanes that have caused major damage in the states of Texas and Florida.

Let us focus on the importance of eradicating poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents one of the most important achievements in the history of our Organization. It is a framework for the struggle for a just world order, so that together, in peace, solidarity and complementarity, we can make progress on eradicating poverty. It is deplorable that so much poverty still persists and that inequalities are now more marked than ever. But this development agenda will mean nothing to our peoples if we, the peoples of the world, do not display the political will, commitment and solidarity we need to promote human development with social justice and environmental policies that protect the planet in harmony with nature and ensure the survival of the human species and the life and rights of Mother Earth.

Seventy-two years on, our Organization is still unable to fully comply with the objectives set out in the Charter of the United Nations. We need fundamental reform urgently if we are to tackle that unfortunate situation. To achieve that, we must promote the crucial changes that will enable the Organization to serve the interests of humankind. We would like to point out that, during his presidency of the General Assembly in 2008, the late Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, whom we rightly call Nicaragua's Chancellor of Dignity — may he rest in peace — worked on and fought until the very end for that fundamental reform, laying the groundwork for discussing these changes. In that regard, it will be vital to reform the Security Council in order to ensure that its composition and function reflect the geopolitical and economic realities of the international community of the twenty-first century. Negotiations on the issue must enter a more dynamic phase as soon as possible, and a negotiating text must be prepared with the goal of reaching the necessary agreements and proceeding with these reforms during the Assembly's seventy-second session.

We urgently need ambitious action to combat climate change. We note with great concern the unprecedented temperatures that are being registered all over the world and the lack of interest in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. The developed countries must take the lead, change their unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and above all meet their financial commitments and complete their technology transfers. The Government and the people of Nicaragua will continue to advocate for a commitment to climate justice, as well as for an essential compensation policy that can be translated into direct and unconditional assistance.

We have welcomed the re-establishment of relations between Cuba and the United States of America, but it is upsetting that we are still seeing not only the restoration of measures aimed at maintaining the cruel, inhuman and criminal economic, financial and commercial embargo on Cuba but also threats to its sovereignty. From this rostrum, we join the other voices around the world saying no to the blockade of the heroic people of Cuba, of Fidel, Raúl, and Martí.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its Bolivarian revolution continue to contend with foreign harassment, interference and aggression. We condemn the threats of the use of force or military options made by the President of the United States against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a threat that, as has been expressed by Nicaragua's President,

> "has no place. The cry in Latin America and the Caribbean is unanimous — nobody wants military intervention from the United States. No one is asking the United States to come and intervene militarily in any Latin American or Caribbean country."

We proclaim our unconditional solidarity with the peoples of Bolívar and Chávez, and with the Government led by its constitutional President Nicolás Maduro and his people in their sovereign decision to democratically elect a Constituent National Assembly. Dialogue and negotiation are the only way forward for peace and reconciliation for the great Venezuelan family.

We wish our brothers in Colombia every success in implementing their peace accord. Our President

has said that Colombia is proving that there can be no military solution to such conflicts, and that after more than 50 years of war, in the end it was negotiations that prevailed. We congratulate Colombia.

We salute and will always stand in solidarity with the struggles of the peoples under occupation of the Latin American and Caribbean country of Puerto Rico; of Western Sahara, under the leadership of the Frente Polisario; and of the Argentine Republic in its legitimate sovereign rights over its Malvinas Islands. Nicaragua reiterates its commitment to the establishment of two States of Israel and Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 1967 borders, with both peoples and Governments living in peace and harmony.

We reiterate our total solidarity with the Government and People of Syria in their fight against international terrorism and defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We emphasize the need for a political and negotiated solution between Syrians and an end to foreign intervention, including financing, military training and supplying arms to terrorist groups, so that there may finally be peace. We are very concerned about the increase in terrorist attacks on our brother peoples and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Nicaragua supports general and complete disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Yesterday we signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Verbal confrontations and threats of the use of nuclear weapons are unacceptable. We must work to advance commitments to eliminating nuclear arsenals around the world until they are gone forever, and to use the enormous resources expended on them to eradicate poverty. The situation on the Korean peninsula is of great concern. Nuclear tests contribute nothing to peace and should be condemned. We call for a political and peaceful solution to this dangerous military scenario through dialogue and negotiation, thereby ending the nuclearization of that region and achieving reunification and peace on the Korean peninsula.

If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must repeal unilateral coercive measures that violate international law and hinder our countries' development plans. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted on the basis of the principle of universality. It is therefore vital to ensure that no one is left behind, and that includes the 23 million Taiwanese who are entitled to participate in the implementation of this global agenda. Taiwan is willing and able to participate in and contribute to the wide range of substantive United Nations programmes aimed at improving the well-being of humankind.

We in Central America are strengthening our integration in every area and working with our brothers and sisters to combat the scourges of terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as to transform the Gulf of Fonseca into a zone of peace and development. Our Government continues to work for the restoration of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of all Nicaraguans, with historic and significant results in the areas of equity, gender, investment, development and security. Nicaragua has been recognized by the World Economic Forum as having one of the best records on gender equity in Latin America and indeed the world. Civil and human security is one of our main strengths. That security is fundamental to social, political and economic stability, promoting a better quality of life, tranquillity, justice, peaceful coexistence and the comprehensive development of families.

In that regard, Nicaragua has developed a series of specific policies and programmes for combating the scourges of our time, such as terrorism, crime, drug trafficking, trafficking of arms and human trafficking, with very positive results. Working with communities has led to a successful collaboration that makes Nicaragua one of the safest countries in the region and one of the least vulnerable to organized crime. We have succeeded in that by consolidating a serious, constructive and transparent alliance between the Government, workers and the private sector, based on the model for alliance, dialogue and consensus that we have implemented while also relying on valuable international assistance, for which we are grateful.

My country has been working extremely hard to make progress in the fight against poverty. We therefore condemn the initiative of a group of United States congressmen who are attempting to damage the economy of Nicaraguan families through a bill known as the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act'(NICA), currently in the United States Senate, aimed at blocking Nicaragua's access to international organizations' programme funds for combating poverty. We want to remind the members of the United States Congress that there is a judgment outstanding by the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, ordering the United

States to compensate the people of Nicaragua for damages incurred from the loss of life and materials caused by acts of terrorism committed by President Reagan's Administration despite congressional opposition, including using drug traffickers to launder money in order to finance a war against Nicaragua while circumventing congressional bans. Nicaragua hopes that Congress will comply faithfully with the verdict of the International Court of Justice, which has ordered that Nicaragua be compensated and that bills such as the NICA Act, promoted by people bent on harming Nicaraguan families, be rejected.

In conclusion, I would once again like to quote my President:

> "Here before the General Assembly, Nicaragua vows to consistently advocate for peace, stability and security in every part of our planet, in every forum, through every mechanism and with every nation with which we have relations."

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I would like to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Hau Do Suan (Myanmar): My delegation has asked for the floor to exercise its right of reply to the irresponsible remarks made by some delegations about my country in the past few days during the course of the general debate. It is deeply regrettable that unsubstantiated allegations have been repeated in this Hall that liken the situation in Rakhine state to ethnic cleansing. Nothing is further from the truth. Terms such as "atrocities", "ethnic cleansing", and "genocide" should not be used lightly and only when there is solid evidence. Atrocities, ethnic cleansing and genocide are very serious charges that require legal review and judicial determination. They should not be bandied about or used loosely. Myanmar objects in the strongest terms to the use by delegations of words such as "atrocities" and "ethnic cleansing" in reference to the situation in Myanmar. I would like to urge them and the international community as a whole to see the situation in northern Rakhine objectively and in an unbiased manner.

Let me be clear. There is no ethnic cleansing. There is no genocide. The leaders of Myanmar, who have long been striving for freedom and human rights, will not espouse such policies. We will do everything we can to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide. The issue of Rakhine state is extremely complex. I will not dwell on the details, since our Vice-President already addressed the issue at length on 20 September (see A/72/PV.10).

It is the responsibility of every Government to fight terrorism and protect innocent civilians. We condemn all human rights violations and violent acts. As members are aware, on 25 August, within hours of the release of the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, a series of coordinated attacks were carried out on 30 police outposts in northern Rakhine state. The so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has claimed responsibility for the attacks, and the Government of Myanmar subsequently declared ARSA to be a terrorist group. The highest Islamic organization in Myanmar, the All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization, has also issued a statement condemning the terrorist attacks in Rakhine state. The vicious attacks have resulted in the loss of life and property and the displacement of peoples. Those who have had to abandon their hearths and homes are many — not just Muslim and Rakhine, but also small minority groups such as Daingnet, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindus. Most of the world has been unaware of the existence and plight of those small groups.

In the affected area of northern Rakhine, the Muslim community is not a minority, as is widely reported. They are in fact a majority, because their population has increased, and they now constitute 95 per cent of the total population in the area. The evil nature of the ARSA terrorist group was revealed once again yesterday, when the authorities discovered a mass grave of 28 Hindu villagers, including women and children, cruelly and brutally killed by the ARSA. Today another 17 bodies have been unearthed, those of some of the 93 Hindu villagers who have been reported missing since the attacks on 25 August. When it comes to terrorism, there can be no choices. The world cannot condone terrorism in any form or manifestation for any reason. We must stand together to eliminate it.

The Assembly may be asking, what of the exodus? There are several reasons for it. Prominent among them is the fear factor. Following the terrorist attacks and the security operation, most women and children were forced to flee, while the men were conscripted

into ARSA to fight the security forces. Many villages were intimidated into fleeing to Bangladesh so as to attract international attention. The scorched-earth policy of the terrorists is another factor. The seeds of terror were meticulously sown long before the attack. Villagers considered to be collaborating with the Government were brutally murdered. The terrorists planted improvised explosive devices everywhere, blew up bridges and committed arson. The Government is striving to restore normalcy, and the situation has improved. Since 5 September, there have been no armed clashes.

At present, humanitarian assistance is our top priority. We are committed to ensuring that all in need receive aid, without discrimination. We have already dedicated significant national funds and resources to humanitarian relief operations. Relief aid and assistance has been being provided immediately after the attacks. Now more effective measures are being put in place by the Government. A new Government-led mechanism, established in cooperation with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, has begun to provide humanitarian assistance to all displaced inhabitants. We are also discussing with our fellow member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) the possibility of utilizing the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance to all the affected communities in Rakhine state.

The Government of Myanmar is fully committed to solving the issue of Rakhine state. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State have given us a clear road map, and the recently formed ministerial-level Implementation Committee has already begun its work. On 22 September, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with the Committee and set out the immediate tasks.

I would like to reiterate that refugees who have fled to Bangladesh will be repatriated to Myanmar, based on the experience of 1993. We will be setting up a working group for verification as quickly as possible in order to conduct a systematic verification process. The Government is organizing a visit on 28 September for the diplomatic corps to the affected areas in northern Rakhine state so that they will have the opportunity to witness first-hand the situation on the ground. We are also reaching out to the Bangladesh side to find a way to solve the problem of refugees.

Mr. Ghaniei (Islamic Republic of Iran): We have requested the floor in exercise of the right of reply in reaction to some statements, including the baseless claims made by representatives of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain during the current general debate. The representative of the United Arab Emirates, in his address on Friday, 22 September (see A/72/PV.18), made several unfounded allegations against my country.

It is regrettable to see that, year after year, representatives of that country resort to the same fabrications against my country. If they think that by repeating a lie often enough it becomes the truth, then they are wholly mistaken, as in reality that proposition is itself a lie. From backing the invasion imposed by Saddam Hussein against my country to participation in the coalition of death in Yemen and spreading takfiri extremism, the officials of the United Arab Emirates, along with Saudi Arabia, have long opted for vicious interventionist policies that have spread instability and chaos in the region and inflicted misery upon its people. As their policies continue to bring about death and destruction in our region, from Syria to Yemen, it is farcical that Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates representatives have the audacity to accuse Iran of supporting terrorism and interfering in other countries' internal affairs.

The three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf have been and continue to be an inseparable and integral part of Iranian territory, and Iran reiterates its sovereignty over those islands. Therefore, any claim to the contrary is categorically rejected. Meanwhile, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with its policy of friendship and good-neighbourliness towards all neighbouring countries, stands ready to discuss any possible misunderstandings with its neighbours. However, it is obvious that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran over said islands are not negotiable.

The representative of the United Arab Emirates should also be reminded that the term "Persian Gulf" has been the correct appellation for the body of water situated between the Arabian peninsula and the Iranian plateau since 500 B.C., and will remain so forever.

Allow me to also briefly refer to the statement made on Saturday, 23 September (see A/72/PV.20) by the representative of the regime of Bahrain, which

contained many of the aforementioned baseless allegations, which we have vehemently rejected. Those illusory accusations amount to desperate efforts to cover up the violation by the oppressive regime of Bahrain of the basic human rights of the majority of the Bahraini people. By leveling those allegations, the ruling family seeks to justify its tyranny, oppression and blatant trampling of the rights of the Bahraini people, who are deprived of any meaningful participation in the running of the country.

Let me conclude by once again reiterating our call for dialogue with a view to dispelling misunderstandings and restoring friendly relations among all countries neighbouring the Persian Gulf region.

Ms. Nuran (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia is compelled to exercise our right of reply to respond to the statements made by the representatives of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and echoed by the representatives of Tuvalu and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, concerning Papua and West Papua.

This is one time too many that a hoax and false allegations are being circulated by individuals who are economically motivated by the separatist agenda of Papua and their supporters. Time and time again, the same fabricated and false accusations are thrown at us. Those countries are sadly blindfolded. They fail to understand, or more precisely, refuse to understand.

The provinces of Papua and West Papua have undergone massive development and progress. During the past three years, 4,325 kilometres of roads, 30 new seaports and 7 new airports were built; 2.8 million Papuans have received free basic health care; 360,000 Papuan students have received free education, while the economy has grown at a rate of 9.21 per cent. All of that makes Papua and West Papua provinces the fastest growing regions in Indonesia.

The provinces of Papua and West Papua are an integral and sovereign part of Indonesia. They will always remain an integral part of Indonesia. Those countries have been foolishly deceived by individuals — I repeat, individuals — with a separatist agenda to exploit the issue of human rights. If human rights are at the heart of the issue, why were those concerns not raised in the appropriate forum, namely, the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Indonesia at the United Nations Human Rights Council? If Indonesia had anything to hide concerning human rights issues in this day and age of open technology, by now everybody would know if such accusations even existed.

Indonesia fails to understand how countries continue to support separatist activities in other countries. Is that a way to hide from one's own domestic problems? Do those countries have a perfect human rights track record? Obviously their motivation in this body is to dismember the territorial integrity of a sovereign and independent nation. Such actions are illegal, must not be condoned and violate the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We cannot let that happen. We cannot let it continue. Indonesia categorically rejects all accusations made by those countries and the individuals with separatist agendas operating behind them.

I would like to conclude by quoting an old Indonesian proverb: if you slap the water in a bucket, then be careful of the water splashing over your own face.

Ms. Tripathi (India): I take the floor to respond to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, in exercise of the right of reply, on Saturday, 23 September (see A/72/PV.22).

The Permanent Representative of Pakistan in her statement yet again sought to divert attention from Pakistan's role as the hub of global terrorism. She did so by callously holding up a picture of an injured girl. It was a photograph of Rawya abu Jom'a, a girl from Palestine. The picture was taken on 22 July 2014 by an American photographer, Heidi Levine. The photograph was published by *The New York Times* on 24 March 2015, under the caption, "Conflict, Courage and Healing in Gaza". The Permanent Representative of Pakistan misled the Assembly by displaying that picture to spread falsehoods about India — a fake picture to push a completely false narrative.

In view of that cynical and misleading attempt by Pakistan, we are constrained to show the Assembly a photograph that reflects the real picture of pain inflicted by the nefarious designs of Pakistan on India. This is a real — not a fake — picture of Lieutenant Umar Fayaz, a young officer from the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Umar Fayaz was kidnapped at a wedding celebration. He was brutally tortured and killed by Pakistan supported terrorists in May 2017. This is a true picture. It portrays a harsh and tragic reality — a picture of terrorism emanating from across our borders that the people of India, especially in the

state of Jammu and Kashmir, have to struggle with every day. This is the reality which the Permanent Representative of Pakistan sought to obfuscate. The true face of Pakistan is not hidden from anyone.

Ms. Hessa AlAteibi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I speak in exercise of my right to reply to the statement made by the representative of Iran.

First, the three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. We categorically reject all of Iran's allegations regarding the three islands, which are occupied by Iran. I call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to act fairly and use peaceful means, especially the International Court of Justice, to resolve this problem.

Similarly, Iran cannot exploit the nuclear agreement to interfere in the internal affairs of other States in the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran pursues expansionist regional policies and seeks to export its problems and terrorism to other States while interfering in the internal affairs of Arab States. Iran is playing a negative role that has a destabilizing effect on our region. Any interference in our country by Iran is completely unacceptable, and we must denounce it.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is supporting terrorism, especially through Hizbullah in Lebanon and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and other groups in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. With regard to the coalition for the restoration of legitimacy in Iran, which the Iranian representative mentioned, it has played a fundamental role, through the United Nations and elsewhere, to ensure respect for legality and legitimacy in Iran. The coalition was set up for that purpose under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, and it has sought to save Yemen and uphold its sovereignty by rejecting any interference by Iran in other States. Morever, only a political process will allow Yemen to emerge from its crisis, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and the Gulf Cooperation Council resolutions.

Iran has helped the Houthis in Yemen through military and logistical means, while weapons and munitions have been sent illegally to that country, in complete violation of Security Council resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015). Iran has sent weapons and munitions to Yemen, which is evidence of its expansionist role in the region and of the threat it poses to Yemeni civilians and the other neighbours of Yemen. Such weapons have been sent not just to the Houthis, but also to other groups that are loyal to the former President Saleh.

We therefore call on the international community to take all steps necessary to ensure that Iran ceases all of these illegal measures. The coalition has always sought a political solution to the problem, but that solution has always been rebuffed by the Houthis.

Ms. Hamad (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to the statement made by the representative of Iran, the entire world is aware of the actions taken by Iran in the past and the present, including interference in the internal affairs of others, aggression and support for terrorist groups and sectarian hatred. Iran must stop these serious human rights violations against its own people. The Iranian regime, through its expansionist and aggressive practices towards its neighbours, has clearly undermined peace and security in the region and the entire world.

We call on the international community to assume its responsibility to confront these hateful actions of Iran through its support for terrorism, intervention, interference in domestic affairs and aggression against the sovereignty and the territories of other countries. These actions have devastating effects on the people and countries in the region.

Mr. Usman (Pakistan): Pakistan would like to exercise its right of reply to the statement just made by the representative of India.

No matter how many times one repeats a lie, it does not and cannot hide the truth. The representative of India has once again chosen to divert the attention of the international community from the real issue: human life; human eyes — those of children and infants — that are blinded forever; and women who are raped and the elderly people killed every day under the reign of brutality unleashed by the Indian occupation forces in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The real issue is that India refuses to implement the Security Council resolutions.

Distracting the debate by displaying pictures has backfired. India's own people do not buy its argument. India, which kills and tortures innocent Kashmiris, is seeking to hide behind a photograph. This shows its desperation and a vain effort to conceal its guilt. Indian State terrorism has been amply documented by successive human rights reports of various international

organizations. There are thousands of pictures to prove Indian State terrorism.

Kashmiris will never be defeated. Kashmiris will take bullet after bullet and pellet after pellet, but they will never give up — just like Nelson Mandela never gave up, and just like the people of Palestine never gave up. India's diversionary tactics will not change the situation on the ground, which India has to answer for. It is its war crimes that India has to answer for. It is the call for legality, morality and conscience that India has to answer.

We ask the world body to act as the conscience of the world to ensure that no child is ever blinded again, that no woman is raped again, and that no elderly people are pushed to the ground and killed again. Kashmiris want freedom from the brutal Indian occupation; they will continue to rise again and again.

Let me remind my Indian colleague that racial superiority and religious dominance are part of the political ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The former members of RSS who are now part of the Indian ruling elite are pursuing the same policy across India, and especially in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. They are now sitting by silently as hundreds of women are raped every day across India, minorities live on the fringes of society, Muslims and Christians are publicly lynched, and State protection is given to the perpetrators of the Samjhauta train terrorist attack.

To become a regional hegemon, Indian leaders are pursuing a policy of State-sponsored terrorism, funding and arming terrorist organizations such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar to launch terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, killing hundreds of innocent women, men and children. India is churning out operatives of mayhem from its factories of terror — operatives like Commander Yadav, who are spreading terror and violence across Pakistan. We caught Yadav red-handed, and we will catch others and bring them to justice. It is not Pakistan, but India's animus against Pakistan that is its biggest enemy.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President: What a week we have had — 196 statements hav been delivered from this rostrum. This is the first time in 11 years that all Member States and observers have addressed the General Assembly. I have followed them closely, and many I listened to first-hand. When it was not possible for me to do so, I asked my team to send me a report directly after every statement was delivered. Thanks to their hard work, I have been able to listen to all. I will not attempt to summarize all 196 statements in this short speech. I would not be able to capture the diversity and complexity of the issues raised, and I would fail to replicate the passion and experience that was brought from nations, cities and homes to this rostrum.

I will do three things instead. First, I will focus on people. I have committed to doing that throughout the session, so today is no different. Secondly, I will review the priorities of the seventy-second session in the light of the input I have received from the members of the Assembly. Thirdly, I will look to the weeks and months ahead.

We have addressed many challenges over the past week. Speakers have talked about their impact on the countries of the world, and, importantly, they also talked about their impact on people. We have heard about people running from gunshots or the force of exploding bombs; people living for a week on the same amount some of us spend on a cup of coffee; people forced to make the decision between risking their lives to stay or risking their lives to flee; people wondering when the next hurricane would hit or if their village would be underwater in a few decades; people who are beginning to lose or have already lost hope in international peace processes; and people still waiting for justice and human rights to become a part of their daily reality.

These statements have not just focused on challenges, however. They have also spoken of solutions and the people who are working to find them. We have heard accounts of strength, resilience, partnerships and entrepreneurial spirit. And I want to thank everyone for placing people at the centre of the general debate. I am confident that we can do even more in the coming session. We can bring our discussions and actions closer to the people they most affect.

Now I want to focus on the seventy-second session in greater depth. I knew my own priorities before the

general debate began. What I did not know was how those present would respond to them. Let me now outline some of the messages I will be taking away from the statements delivered.

First, I have heard overwhelming support for the proposal to prioritize peace and prevention. Many speakers have reiterated the call of the Secretary-General for a surge in diplomacy to stop today's conflicts and have called for the United Nations to do more to prevent conflicts from breaking out. We must draw from national, regional and international experiences of mediation and conflict prevention. We must realign our approach to emphasize peace in what we now call "peace and security". There has also been stress on continued support to United Nations peacekeeping. Peace operations are doing a vital job. They work to protect civilians and support national actors to build and maintain peace. We have heard that some citizens have paid the ultimate price while serving under the United Nations flag. I want to thank them, on behalf of the General Assembly, for their ongoing commitment.

Secondly, speakers have talked about the needs of people all over the world and expressed a vision in which human rights, gender equality and the rule of law and norms reign. Today, unfortunately, they often remain the exceptions. So, we have more work to do in realizing that vision. I have also heard calls for us to look beyond the labels of "refugee" or "migrant" to simply see people. Many have told us about the work being done for those people and to support for the States and communities hosting them. Additionally, many have stressed the need for a comprehensive global framework.

Thirdly, speakers have reminded us of all of the promises we have made to the people and the planet. Throughout the week, we have listened to accounts of the work being done to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Some have also made clear that climate change has become a matter of life or death for people, ecosystems, ways of life and even entire countries. It has therefore been heartening to witness a major show of support for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in this Hall. Finally, speakers have reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations and to one another by saying that we are stronger together in a system based on dialogue and multilaterialism, and stressed that any alternative would risk repeating the mistakes of history.

But many have also acknowledged two things. The first is that the world is changing. Those changes are for both good and bad, and are happening at a fast pace. The second is that the United Nations must do more to adapt to that change. Over the coming session, we will hear more ideas and positions on how that should happen. I am committed to ensuring that our discussions are as open, inclusive and transparent as possible.

I want to pause here to speak frankly. Not all of the messages delivered in the general debate have been positive. Many of them have contained criticisms of other countries or of the United Nations. But that is part of the package. It is the right of the members of the Assembly to do that. And regardless of the size, population or economy of the countries they represent, all delegations have access to the same platform for the same amount of time. They can speak freely, without censorship. We must remember that differences in unilateral positions do not prevent multilateral agreement. They might give us more work to do. Our negotiations may be more difficult, but they can also make the outcome stronger. I therefore want to embrace both the consensus and the contention that have been part of this year's general debate.

The only thing left to do is to look ahead. The seventy-second session will involve milestones. Some of them are already on the calendar, such as the high-level event on sustaining peace, in April, and the adoption of global compacts related to migrants and refugees in September. Already this week, the General Assembly will convene the high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. That shows our readiness to follow up on mandates inherited from previous sessions from an early stage. I am sure that other major events will happen throughout the year, in response to the initiative of Member States or in reaction to events happening around the world. Additionally, the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly will soon begin. All six Committees are important tools for multilaterialism. We should make use of them.

Before I conclude, I want to thank all those who have contributed to the general debate of the seventy-second session. I thank the representatives of Member States and observers for standing up here and outlining their visions. I want to acknowledge the Vice-Presidents for their able chairing on my behalf.

I also want to thank everyone who has worked to ensure the smooth running of the debate and the security of all participating in it, and in particular our colleagues in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Those people have not stood on the podium, but we would not be here without all of the work they have done, out of the spotlight and behind the scenes. I believe they deserve our applause.

I am sure that many of the delegations here today are breathing a sigh of relief. High-level representatives have returned to their capitals. Schedules no longer contain back-to-back meetings and events. Most people probably deserve a break, but those whom we all represent — the people I have talked about today — need us to do the opposite. They need us to focus on action, now more than ever. So let us get to work.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.